

As time went on more operators got into the spraying business and it slowed up. Sam had an abrasive demeanor which didn't help his business. Also, the number of G.I. students began to drop off. One day without saying anything to us he packed up in the middle of the night and left. We heard that he was also in trouble with a woman in town. No one knew for sure where he went but we suspected he went back to New Jersey. Later a couple of guys came and ferried out his planes.

Hoppy and I continued to run things for a little while but neither of us had the resources. Hoppy had a wife in town so he left for other employment. I applied to American Airlines in Tulsa and was immediately hired as a Junior Mechanic at \$1.29/hr, advancing to \$1.90/hr as Full Mechanic after a 3 month probation. I had a car by this time that Sam had fixed up. It was now June, 1948. The starting job was in engine teardown, interesting but very dirty work. However it gave me an insight into the workings of large radial engines, P&W R-2800s mostly. It also was instructive as to what fails and why. I later transferred into engine accessory overhaul, staying in that till April, 1951.

Backing up to 1949, resources and the future were now secure enough for Lib and I to tie the knot on April 15th in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Morning sun, Iowa. Reverend Wylie Dougherty, my new father-in-law did the honors. This was the best thing that ever happened to me. Lib dropped out of college after her second year, which was a disappointment to her folks although they never gave any sign of it. However, we both figured a 3 1/2 year romance was long enough. It must have been a good knot that was tied as it has lasted very close to 56 years at this writing. Housekeeping began in a small upstairs garage apartment at the home of the folks I rented a room from while attending Spartan.

During the AA years I was working on my Commercial at Ross School of Aviation on the south side of town on off days and evenings. As part of the course I was checked out in the Cessna 120, Stearman, Stinson and the Emigh Trojan, an odd low wing with the metal ribs on the outside of the

wing. The only one I ever saw. I had previously checked out in Piper PA 11s and an Aeronca Champ after soloing in Norton's J-3.

One of the highlights while flying at Ross' was sneaking Lib on board the Cessna 120 and showing her Tulsa at night. She would park (we had a car by then) near the departure end of the runway and away we would go.

One of Ross' Commercial night flying requirements was landing without the use of the aircraft landing light, using only the runway lights to determine height and angle. Their reasoning was that some night you might find the landing light inoperative or in a plane without one and if you were used to using only the runway lights you would have no problem. I became comfortable with this and have never used a landing light since.

Also while in Tulsa I located a basket case Aeronca 65 TAC. This was the civilian version of the 2 place Tandem L-3. This would be the first of 6 planes I owned all or part of. 7 if you count the Pixie now in progress. Purchase price was \$200 or maybe \$150 I forget, but was real cheap. The engine, a Franklin 65 was also a basket case and overhauled partly in the apartment. The unfinished fuselage and wings were later transported from Tulsa to Topeka but again, I am getting ahead of the story.

But to go on, Shelly came along while at AA, which was another highlight. Another, previous to that was our taking a late honeymoon using airline standby privileges. We flew from one end of the country to the other, riding in about every type plane AA had. As I recall, we were treated like paying passengers. But time marched on. Airline pay gave us a better car and future but I knew Lib missed being within the bounds of our church and so did I. Also, I missed working on light aircraft.

Rev. Paul McCracken, pastor of our Reformed Presbyterian Church in Topeka was contacted and we were told of a small airport on the west side of town. Unknown to us he immediately made a

personal visit to Jack Allen the airport owner and operator and lo and behold he was in need of a mechanic! (Again the Lord's working.) We drove up, met Jack and I was hired on the spot in May, 1951. Pay was \$300/month for a 6 day week. This was less than AA pay but enough to get by. It was also back to the type of work I preferred, and it pleased both of us to be back within the bounds of the R.P. Church. We moved into a 2nd floor apartment that was not air-conditioned and very hot. However, Lib managed, even with a baby and with the fridge on the lower stair landing because the apartment was too small for it. As soon as Lloyd and Ella McElroy's basement apartment was finished we moved into it. (They were church friends.) This was much better. Later we bought our first house, a small one, 1/2 mile from the airport. Again the Lord was providing.

I found Allen Airport, one of two small ones on the outskirts of town had two sod runways one 2450' lighted running north/south and one 1800' running northwest/southeast, used only in strong winds. The north/south runway had power lines, a highway, and a house right at the north end. The south end only had a fence and pasture behind it. This will become important later.

Jack was a Cessna and later a Piper dealer and had several planes for rental, sales, and charter. The business end was a combined office/hangar building, a run down shop hangar (although he was in the process of building a new one), gas shack, and two rows of T-hangars about ¾ full. He was a Private Examiner and had a fairly good charter/rental business. He had lost his mechanic and was in the process of hiring a part time Instructor so he could devote more time to charter. Compared to Benkelman it was a busy place and I found Jack to be a peach of a boss. This would become very important later as within a month or so Allen Airport would become the busiest airport in Topeka.

During this time, 1951-1957 many things happened, too many to recount, but I will try to hit the high points not always in order. 1) Dave and Kevin were born. 2) The Aeronca TAC was finished and flown, sold, and replaced with a flying Aeronca L-3. The one later forced down by me and run through

a fence by Bill Herrick. More on these two adventures later. The L-3 was sold or traded, I forget which, for a pristine Taylorcraft L-2, the best of the trainers I owned. Eventually it too was sold and some of the money helped to begin building a scratch-built Stits Playboy, a low wing, single open cockpit powered by an 85 Continental. But that was down the line a ways. 3) Jack hired a brand new "P" mechanic, a good man, to help me, raised my wages to \$380/month and changed work week to 5 1/2 days and finally to 5 days/week. 4) I was issued a DAMI (Designated Aircraft Maintenance Inspector) rating by the FAA in January 1953, one of only 5,000 or so in the whole country. I considered it quite an honor and can't describe how much help this was in later years. 5) With the aid of a friend with money, the Lakes was trailered from Wapello to the shop. I rebuilt, licensed and test flew it. The partner who was just learning to fly paid all of the bills. Jack, who wanted to see it fly also, furnished a spot in the shop, and fuel and materials at cost. I think he appreciated the fact that all the work on these aircraft was done on my own time during evenings and days off as well as all the unpaid overtime I often put in. I sold half of the Lakes to the co-owner in June 1957. He flew it awhile then traded it for a Swift, which he later landed gear up. I lost track of it after that.

As I mentioned before, the Allen years opened up flight experiences I could have received at no other time or place. Jack was both a Cessna, Piper, and Taylorcraft dealer at various times and operated a Cessna 140, two C170s, a 4-place Taylorcraft, a Piper Tri-Pacer, a Piper Comanche, and a Cessna 195. I regularly flew all of them either on test flights or on short charters and check rides for renters. An exception was the Comanche and C195. These were Jack's babies and flown by him alone.

But back to the high points. 6) The flood. I hadn't been on the job too long when the great flood of '51 occurred. It was a little like Noah's flood on a smaller scale. Every airport for miles was flooded and closed. Highways and railroads were flooded. All farms anywhere near the Kansas River were under water. Allen's was the only open airport in Topeka. Planes were ferried over till we ran out

of hangar space and tie-downs. We had traffic it seemed from daylight to dark and those are the hours we all worked 7 days a week. The shop was closed and I flew every day usually in a C-170. The field was soft and sometimes the take-offs were hairy particularly towards the north (remember the power lines and house right across the street if you were going north.) Farmers were lined up to pay for flights to check on cattle or just for a quick flight across the river. I had one charter flight longer than most to western Kansas. I ran into darkness and rain on the return flight, diverted to Manhattan and laid over. Of course I called Lib and she called Jack. One exciting thing was a mid-air over our runway between a Cub and a Cessna, I think. One started to land on top of another but they both got down with only damage, no injuries. Almost a fist fight though each blaming the other. As I recall Jack ordered the one at fault off the field and told him not to come back—an advantage of having your own airport. Eventually the water receded and things got back to normal. A lot of that time was not logged as I was just too busy. I think the Lord was watching over all of us.

Other high points during those years. 7) My brother Gary wanted a good, reasonable T-craft. I located one in western Kansas, in good shape for \$1250, I think, a 1946 Taylorcraft BC12D. He sent me the money sight unseen. I delivered it to him at the Muscatine airport. It gave him many good hours till a thunderstorm broke it loose from its tie-down with him in it trying to hold it down. It made a big loop, wiped out and put him in the hospital with serious injuries. He later bought a Citabria.

Other high points involved one of our “airport bums” a friendly name for guys who hang around airports and the same one who was with me in our ill-fated watermelon patch experience (the less said about that the better). He bought, from where I don’t know, a Pasped Skylark, a 2 place side-by-side open cockpit plane with a streamline wire-braced low wing, powered with a 125 Warner radial engine. A beautiful airplane, a classic, only a few of them still registered. Anyway, he had low time and was

hesitant to fly it. It was just another airplane as far as I was concerned and I flew it, later checking him out in it. It was an easy plane to fly, like the Lakes. I hate to think what it would be worth today.

But the above is probably of interest only to pilots, on to forced landings. The first I mentioned on page 9, the second occurred while test flying a 4 place Stinson after an inspection. I was in the traffic pattern on downwind for landing when without warning the 165 Franklin just quit. I was too low to try a restart so I managed to glide to a dead stick landing on the airport. Fortunately I was landing north and not over the house and wires on the other end. I and Harry, my helper, towed it in and found it had developed a crack in the carburetor float, as fuel was just running out of the carburetor. It turned out that the FAA was already in the process of issuing an AD requiring mandatory replacement of the float in all engines using that carburetor. So this one wasn't my fault!

The third one was with the Lakes. My ill-fated watermelon patch passenger had a brother who had survived a fatal in a Stinson during a simulated forced landing—no engine problem they just didn't see the wires in time. Anyway, he wanted to ride in the Lakes. The fuel gauge was a glass tube with a cork float. It leaked so I had removed it and was using a graduated dip stick to check the fuel. We were not going to fly long, maybe just around the field and I judged we had enough fuel. At about 300 feet on take off, the Menasco quit. No starter and no time anyway. The best field within gliding distance had a low terrace and I didn't make it over it—nose up, broken prop, left wheel torn off at the axle, and a dent in the left wing leading edge. There were no brakes either by the way, but it wouldn't have made any difference. It took about a month of spare time to fix it and get it ready to fly again. Locating a replacement prop took a little longer.

The third one was also my fault. It was in the L-3, flying Lib and Shelly to Morning Sun, where there was a pasture big enough to land in. It was across the road from the small farm the folks had at that time. (Bill Herrick later broke a prop in it, running it through a fence.) Anyway, on the way up

there we ran into headwinds stronger than anticipated and were within about 5 miles of our fuel stop when it quit. I set it down in a farmer's pasture sent Lib and Shelly on over to the airport, got some tractor gas from the farmer and flew it on over there. I have never flown with less than a ¼ tank since in any airplane. Truly the Lord was watching over me and my precious cargo on this one especially. As a side note, in the Avid I have three ways to check the fuel level!

One thing worthy of mention, was when Harold Krier, a world class aerobatic pilot from western Kansas stopped by Allen's to see the Lakes I was rebuilding. He was famous for his Lomcevac maneuver in the Great Lakes he owned. It is a flipping end over end stunt that looks impossible to do. Unfortunately I was gone at the time. I later met him at Rockford at the EAA Fly-in. Little did I know that the time would come as an FAA Inspector when I would inspect his cracked plane, record the spot his body had hit when his chute didn't open, and look at his body on a slab while the Coroner examined it. I also had to store his chute until the accident investigation was over and his relatives came to claim it. No wonder I'd usually get a migraine headache following each fatal accident I was on, but that was all in the future.

Before leaving this part of the Allen years, I'll relate several experiences. One of the many "airport bums" had a Piper Cub and one day wanted to go coyote hunting. I said OK if I could do the driving as many coyote hunters spin in making low level steep turns. He agreed after being warned not to shoot the strut off. We went out on my first day off and flew about an hour over the Kansas range land till we spotted a small pack. Snow was on the ground so it made spotting easy. It took about 3 passes with him emptying before finally hitting one. That satisfied him and we flew back home.

On another occasion a guy wanted to shoot a goose. Many flocks were passing over. He had an Ercoupe (the canopy slid down on both sides) and said that he would fly as he wasn't a very good shot. We located a flock very easily, slid up under them and I dropped one down. (This was a new

experience following one down—just like flying in WWI.) We marked the spot and drove back over there but never located it. Another goose experience happened with the Lakes. I was just tooling around one day and spotted a flock. They didn't break up like ducks do, just kept turning away holding formation. But I did find that if I just stayed above, I could herd them right to the ground. I wonder what they thought the big noisy white bird was.

This brings us to about June 1957. I was beginning to feel I had gone about as far with Jack as possible and we were not getting ahead much financially. TWA in Kansas City was hiring and after giving Jack notice I applied. I was immediately hired at \$2.13/hr. as a Junior Mechanic. Advancement to Senior Mechanic at \$2.92/hr. was automatic after probation. The job gave good medical coverage, something I didn't have with Jack. I had to give up my Auth. Inspector rating (the DAMI rating had changed to A.I.) as both required a shop to retain it, but nothing but the A&P was required by the airlines. So we moved to Kansas city and bought a house. During the three or so years there I worked in hydraulics on Constellations, DC-6s, and Convairs. When the opportunity came up I transferred to the test cells running P&W R-2800s, and Wright R-3350s. The newly overhauled engines had to be hooked up to a dynamometer in the cell, pre-heated, pre-oiled and run for a certain length of time at specified power settings. This included a short time wide open. The cell readings were corrected for humidity and outside air temperature as well as for air pressure. If they didn't meet prescribed limits they were rejected and sent back. This didn't happen very often. Any minor problems such as idling speed or small leaks were generally fixed in the cell. The fun part was the first start up. The R-2800s were cranky and would easily catch fire if over primed. Usually if this happened they would start and suck out the fire. Once in a great while they wouldn't and you had to revert to the fire extinguisher system. This wasn't good as the engine then had to be inspected for damage. Fortunately, most of the runs were on R-3350s, which were not as cranky. I would compare the R-3350 to a locomotive engine

and the R-2800 to a race car engine. The test cells were supposed to be sound proofed but were still noisy, especially if you had to go in while they were running. There was no ear protection in those days except for people out on the ramp. I blame part of my hearing loss to the time in the cells.

But to pick up my story, it was now 1959 and seniority being what it was I knew it would be years before a lead or an inspector's job opened up so I began looking at the FAA at Fairfax airport. This shop maintained their DC-3s and twin Beeches. I applied and was hired. I don't remember the wages but it was about equal to TWA's. The hours were better (days) and vacations and sick leave benefits were also better. In addition it was Civil Service. I still had a plane (I always had a plane) an L-2 Taylorcraft painted PINK. After two tandem Aeroncas this was by far the best of the three planes and it was Continental 65 powered. One of the previous had a 65 Franklin, the other a 65 Lycoming so I had a good basis for comparison. I had installed primer lines to all 4 cylinders and it was always easy to start in any weather. I kept it tied down on the FAA ramp.

I had heard that FAA Flight Standards was hiring Inspectors with certain qualifications—A&Ps with both light and heavy aircraft experience holding an A.I. (Authorized Inspector rating). I had exchanged my DAMI rating in for the A.I. rating but had let it lapse during TWA as a shop was necessary to hold it as well as continuing doing annual aircraft inspections to keep it current. I knew I had to get it back so I flew over to see Jack Allen again. I told him I intended to apply to Flight Standards for a job and needed a shop and would stay with him until they called. That was OK with him as he still had no one with the A.I. rating. So I resigned from FAA Fairfax took and passed the A.I. written and applied to FAA for a job in Flight Standards. It was a long wait.

From July 1959 to October 1960 I worked in Topeka and flew the little T-craft from Topeka to a little strip west of Kansas City and back every weekend. I would leave work in the late evening every Friday and fly back early each Monday morning. I don't recall that I missed a day because of weather

but am sure I did in the winter. I felt like those early airmail pilots I had so admired so many years previously. I think I knew every house, farm, and tower between Topeka and Kansas City, although there were not so many of those back then. Ninety-nine percent of the flying was in daylight but once in a great while I couldn't get away in time, which meant a night landing without lights, cockpit or airstrip. I would call and alert Lib and she would be waiting with the headlights pointed into the wind and I would land right over her. It sounds suicidal now when I think about it but it is a matter of perspective. I was young and had absolute confidence in myself and the plane and to be truthful am now more nervous driving in Kansas City traffic than I ever was in the cockpit.

I have four pages of logbook entries covering this period and there were some flights I didn't bother to log. Most certainly the Lord was watching over me during those flights.

The call from the FAA finally came and with Jack's blessing I left him. I later heard that he was nearly killed returning from a charter trip.

After an interview and a physical I was hired in October 1960 as General Aviation Maintenance Inspector in the South Bend Indiana GADO (General Aviation District Office). Pay was at the GS-11 rating, more than I had made in any previous job. The move was on us (all the rest were paid) so I had to sell my faithful L-2. It was hard to part with it. I went first to locate housing. Lib stayed in our house in Parkville until I was settled in and then rented the house. We finally got moved into a rental, as I anticipated a transfer after training. Also, we didn't want to own in South Bend. The move included a ¾ finished Stits.

The office was located in the South Bend Municipal Airport. It had a Supervising Inspector, four Principle Inspectors (two Operations/Flight and two Maintenance.) I was the third, or trainee. In addition there were two secretaries. I later learned that this was considered a small office.

We had almost unlimited use of Cessna 172s from the adjoining Cessna dealer. They even let us pick the color when they got new ones. In addition there were two beat up government cars. Our area covered the northern half of Indiana plus some of southern Michigan. Our job was inspection, certification, filing violations, and investigations of complaints and accidents (small aircraft). NTSB handled the large ones, although we often assisted them.

One of my first assignments was to interview a troublesome mechanic who, I learned later, had threatened to shoot the next FAA man on his place, but once we talked there was no problem. I guess he recognized a kindred soul. Many FAA types were ex-military and had little or no civilian experience. I found out later that this was prevalent throughout the whole FAA.

The job was interesting and educational. One accident, not serious, was in a nudist camp. (No, I didn't take off my clothes.) One certification job, a long lasting one I was somehow assigned to, was to inspect and issue Limited Airworthiness Certificates to P51s and I had never seen one opened up. A local used aircraft dealer had purchased a whole squadron as surplus, from Canada. That's how I got my one and only P51 ride. This one had been converted to a second seat. These were the source of various little P51 items such as armor plate, control grips, etc. that I often brought home. That's how the Stits received a control grip. The guns were already out or I might have "acquired" one.

There were lots of home-built inspections. In those days the District Office inspected every home-built twice—once in progress (pre-cover) and final when the Airworthiness Certificate was issued, and it expired every year, so every home-built required yearly inspection. Now, one inspection does it and the certificate doesn't expire. I met Duane Cole in this way and issued a certificate at least once on his clipped wing Taylorcraft. Although not a home-built, it was Experimental. I met his son Rolly and his wife. In fact, we exchanged Christmas cards for a number of years. Surprisingly the first time I met him was to pick up his Repair Station Certificate at his shop in Ft. Wayne. I also met some

race pilots while checking their planes. One of them was Danny Sherman (midget racer). I later met the now famous Burt Rutan who at that time worked for the ill-famed Jim Bede.

My Stits was in a local hangar and I finished it and got it certified. (FAA didn't allow licensing your own plane.) Then on my first takeoff I found no airspeed reading so I flew it and landed by sound and feel (clogged air speed line.)

After 6 months probation I was promoted to regular Inspector status as a GS-12 (which meant more money.) In September 1966 I bid a GS-13 job in the West Chicago office located on the DuPage Airport in St. Charles, Illinois. We moved to St. Charles and bought a house. The promotion to GS-13 brought a Principle Inspector title as this office was larger with a larger crew, including an Avionics Inspector. The office assigned area was the northern third of Illinois with a large population, more airports and more planes. I was assigned among other things, the air taxi operators and Midwest Airlines at Midway Airport near downtown Chicago. At first I thought I had been assigned the bottom of the pool but later I learned the connection to Midwest Airlines was to become a great asset.

One black Air Taxi operator there was a real character. He kept a pistol in his desk drawer and made no bones about it. He said that he didn't feel safe without it. I found that you were taking a chance after dark parking a government vehicle there as stripping was so common. I used to keep accident pictures in a scrapbook (photos were required so I kept extra copies). But finally, after a few years I quit doing it. I still have the scrapbook but haven't looked at it in 20 years until reviewing it for this journal.

One highlight while in the Chicago office was flying the Stits to Rockford, Illinois to attend the annual EAA fly-in. The family drove and we stayed all week and camped. I was considered "on duty," checking planes, although I didn't do much. I did ground the Gold Bug, a real bad home-built. He had to leave on a Ferry Permit. I believe that son Dave got the flying/building bug at that fly-in.

I was now hangaring the Stits at a small nearby airport. Another highlight while at DuPage was being in a TV commercial. The local TV station had seen the plane and approached me to dress up in a costume and fly and land and taxi in for the commercial. As I recall it was a dog's costume and the head mask obscured vision so much that I could hardly see to fly. I checked with my supervisor before I did it and he said OK. They paid me \$500 and were supposed to send pictures but never did, although we saw the commercial on TV.

They sent me to many tech courses while there, mostly at the Academy in Oklahoma City. But the most notable one was a 2 week Basic Investigation course at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. I see it mentioned in the news on TV once in a while.

After 3 years in the Chicago GADO (it was now 1969) I had the opportunity to transfer in-grade to the Wichita, Kansas GADO. This was partly due to knowing the Supervising Maintenance Inspector there (I had attended courses with him) and also because of my experience with Air Midwest, which was now partly operating in Wichita. I also had attended a Maintenance course on their new Beech 99s. This was earlier at the Beech plant in Wichita. The job promised an eventual promotion to GS-14. Another advantage of the move was that there was a Reformed Presbyterian Church in Park City, a short drive from Wichita. We had been worshipping in the Chicago RP Church while in South Bend and also while in St. Charles—a long drive from both places. Wichita was also closer to Lib's folks in Sterling.

We put our house up for sale and moved to Wichita, buying a house there. There were no more moves till retirement in December 1985. One interesting side note on the house purchase was that Lib and family stayed in St. Charles till the house sold and I was given a detailed specification as to the house to be purchased. When I located one within our means and one which met those requirements

and mine I bought it without Lib even seeing it, except for a few pictures. Talk about a gamble! Fortunately, she was very pleased with it.

The time from 1969 to retirement in 1985 passed quickly. I was promoted to the GS-14 position and moved to an office with a secretary and three Principle Maintenance Inspectors under me as well as an Avionics Inspector as I was now the Supervising Maintenance Inspector and eventually no longer required to stand accident standby.

The office was now called a FSDO (Flight Standards District Office) and had some Air Carrier responsibilities not just general aviation aircraft. Our assigned district was all of Kansas except for three counties near Kansas City. Surprisingly, we had many airports scattered all over the state, plus maintenance responsibilities for Beech, Lear, Cessna, and a Repair station in the Boeing plant. The Stits was hangared at a small field on the north side but it seemed I didn't have time to fly it much. I was able to use it several times to fly to outlying airports for Surveillance (and got mileage for it). I believe I was the only FAA Inspector using a home-built for FAA business. The pilots and mechanics loved it! I was one of them! The Lord had richly blessed this poor boy from Wapello.

During this time we saw all three children out of the nest, two graduated from our church college in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania and the third was in the aviation industry at Beech.

Other high points while in Wichita were a special Achievement award (\$500 check), a letter from the famous race pilot Col. Roscoe Turner explaining his Bonanza gear-up landing, a demo ride in a new Helio Courier by a company pilot demonstrating zero airspeed flight (it really does it), and night flights in a Beech Duchess monitoring their tail Mod. (I volunteered to get time off for duck hunting.) Also, lots of good hunting at Cheyenne Bottoms, the best duck hunting I have ever seen. There were others, but too many to recount.

As time passed I gradually lost my love for flying. FAA flight requirements for use of rental aircraft became too restrictive. Accounting for the flight time to the tenth of the hour, flight plans, radio usage requirements, continual check rides, etc. made me finally turn in my rental card. My brother Gary had met a guy who wanted to buy the Stits so I finally sold it and flew it to Davenport, Iowa to the buyer. Gary even checked out in it.

I had, after over 25 years in GADOs and FSDOs, gotten burned out dealing with accidents, dishonest pilots, incompetent mechanics and the FAA red tape and bureaucracy. I was amazed to notice that I didn't even want to look up at a plane flying overhead. The office was gradually changing over to computers, which meant a lot less personal contact with the maintenance and flight people so I decided it was time to hang it up. I had previously noticed this attitude change in old inspectors but never thought it would affect me.

On some of our vacations we had camped (we had a travel trailer by this time) at a trailer park in Osceola, Missouri. Osceola was on the Osage River, the headwaters of the new Truman Lake. Fishing and, more importantly, duck hunting was good there—lots of water and sparsely populated public land. We had camped there several summers and liked the area. Osceola was a small river town something like Wapello and was the County seat. Land and taxes were cheap by Wichita standards. Also, it had a hospital and (which would become important later) a small airport. In addition, winters were mild, by Iowa standards, about the same as Wichita. Dave and Shelly were both married and in Kansas City and son Kevin lived in Wichita so all were within a reasonable driving distance. So we sold our Wichita house and bought one of the three acre lots in a development and moved our trailer to the lot and began building. The acreage expanded to two additional lots, one on each side. With Dave's help we installed a trap range on one of the adjoining lots and began clearing, mowing, building, and boating. We call it Maine Haven and it's ideal for our purposes.

And then came Dave. He had started flying, was working on his Private and even had a set of plans for a Cub type home-built. He had joined EAA and started making small parts. That and the new home-built kit designs that were coming out relit the spark. I hadn't flown since retirement in late 1985. He, on the other hand, was flying regularly, had gotten his Private (I was his first passenger, his mother was his second) and was in a club that owned a Citabria and later a Decathlon. He was into aerobatics and had won several contests in the Basic category and is preparing to move up to the Sportsman category.

Anyway, with Dave's help I built a shop, purchased additional tools (I had a lot already) and started looking at designs. I settled on a kit plane as I didn't want to waste 6 or 7 years getting back into the air. It was a high wing, two-place side-by-side tail dragger, called an Avid. It was the short wing version as the shop wouldn't handle anything larger. It also had folding wings, which was necessary. So Lib and I flew airline out to the Idaho factory to see and ride in one. I bought it and the kit was delivered in April 1992. I was 67. After several false starts on the engine selection I finished it got it licensed and test flew it in February 1999. Dave checked out in it also. Next, I needed a hangar on the local airport, and bought a used one. As I told Dave, "in for a penny, in for a pound." I found that I was a little rusty after all the years and will never get my former touch back but I manage to get it up and down and even make a good landing once in a while. It is a pleasure to fly if you can put up with the noise and air leaks. It is very smooth and easy on the controls, like most home-builts. Factory birds feel like trucks in comparison. It likes to fly but is short coupled and will bite on landings and take offs if you are not careful. I fly it with very thin soled shoes to better feel the rudder.

As part of my new interest a friend and I started a local EAA chapter in Osceola now in Clinton and we were the first officers. It now has over 25 members, 4 or 5 home-builts flying or in progress and a bout 8 factory planes of various types.

For some reason, wanting to relive my youth, perhaps, I began thinking about building one last plane, an open cockpit job. Dave and I had looked at a flying home-built, a Starduster biplane, but I decided it was too much plane for me and even had trouble getting in and out of it. There were also some other things I didn't like. I even purchased a set of plans and some materials but gave that up as it would take too long. Then I found out a chapter member had a home-built about half finished. He had found that he was too big to get in and out of it at 6' and 200 pounds. The workmanship was superb. It was a Pober Pixie, a design by Paul Poberezny, founder of EAA. It had a high parasol wing, and was a single open cockpit tail dragger. Looking at it I envisioned a WWI Fokker D-VIII fighter, so I bought it at a very reasonable price in early 2001. Later I located a fresh majored Continental 65 engine at a good price. This would represent full circle. The first plane I ever saw close up was open cockpit so was my first ride, so was my first home-built, and this one would do for the last one. I now have the fuselage, tail surfaces and ailerons covered and one wing—the other is waiting, hopefully to be covered next spring. I work on it when I feel like it and don't have a timetable as working on them gives as much pleasure as flying them.

So the last chapter of this journal, which began with a flight lesson on April 23, 1946, is yet to be written.

I remember a rhyme that came to me in a dream on November 27, 1995. It was so real that it woke me up and I got up to write it down before it was forgotten. It goes as follows:

Your work is now complete
Your labor has been sweet
Know this, as you compete
'Tween earth and sun

It may mean something or it may not. Time will tell, in any event the last phrase of the rhyme was selected as the title of this journal.

R.B. Maine