



Photos by Kathleen Elynn/Chieftain

Mark Peterson (rear, in jump suit) had lots of volunteers to help him push his P-51 plane back to the display area after his impressive air show performance at the 2016 Wallowa County Fly-In.

## FLY-IN

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The problem turned out to be more than the pilots and their new volunteer mechanic could deal with, so eventually Rob just made two trips to Moose Creek, hauling in the gals on the first trip. The second plane was repaired by the time they returned from the camping trip.

Amy, a former reporter, wrote about that miraculous experience for The Oregonian, and the Chief Joseph Flyers really heard about it from pilots all over the state.

### The name game

This year Amy and Rob returned with Rob's new plane, Gracie.

When Rob purchased the plane he took delivery of it in a field out in remote Missouri. Amy recalled how he just stood and looked at it and looked at it. The sun began to go down and it started to get dark. Finally Amy said, "Say good night, Gracie." And the plane was named.

"She's a driver," Amy said. "We take her all kinds of places and have adventures."

### On the road again

Rob got his pilot's license in Torrance, Calif., before he could drive, and he's a very good pilot — witness the fancy parking trick. This year alone the couple has taken Gracie to Sanoma, Calif.; Kelowna, British Columbia; Friday Harbor in the San Juan Islands; and Joseph. They headed back to the Puget Sound area after the event.

This, too, is typical pilot stuff. Many pilots came with tents, folding bicycles and even inflatable rafts crammed into the storage area.

John Dunlap and Robyn Holdman of Sisters, Ore., unpacked their folding bikes at the Joseph Airport for a trip to the Bronze, Blues and Brews



Bill Hall, secretary of the North East Oregon Aviation Foundation, welcomes a smiling Dennis Smith of Enterprise back from his flight with experienced pilot Barney Locke.

### festival at Joseph City Park.

John named his 1973 Cessna Skywagon 180 Betty Jean after his late mother, who died just a few days before he bought the plane.

"She never got to go up in her," Dunlap said. "But now she goes up with me every time I fly."

### Late bloomers

Not all pilots are young guys, either. Many folks don't get their chance to get up in the air until later in life.

Marty Ables, wife of Wallowa County Flyers Association President Bill Ables, said she hasn't been a pilot's wife for long, and the Ables mostly take small trips from Portland to Joseph and back. But she loves sitting right next to the window and the feeling of hanging in space and the sound of the engine.

"All these planes have great sounding engines," she said, gesturing down the runway at the collection of planes.

### Earning those wings

Stories of long journeys to becoming a pilot also were common.

Dennis Smith of Enterprise says he stopped short of getting his license but went up to Alaska as a fishing guide and has flown bush planes a lot.

"I soloed and everything," he recalled, "but I left for Alaska before I got my full time in for a license."

He loves the Joseph Fly-In. "This is a great little event," he said. "I saw the P51 flying around and I said, 'Oh, yeah. That's this weekend.'"

Smith went up in the Chief Joseph Flyers Cessna 172 plane, flown by Barney Locke, a retired Northwest Airlines and Sri Lankan Airlines pilot. Smith was all smiles when he came down.

Emmet Wold of both Hermiston and Joseph brought his "adopted nephew" Greg, 9, with him for his first time in the sky and went up with Tim Locke, president of the North East Aviation Foundation and former pilot for Delta, Northwest and Skywest.

Emmet has been a student pilot for many years and has flown a lot, but he hasn't yet earned his pilot's license.

"Soon," he said. "Soon."



The vintage DC-3 drew many admirers at the 2016 Wallowa County Fly-In.

### Biggest gathering yet

The air show was a bit limited this year, but the huge crowd was awed by the performance of pilot Mark Peterson in his North American P-51 Mustang Diamondback.

The impressive warplane was a favorite of the crowd on the basis of its history and sleek look.

"These planes are much

easier to fly than the stories told about them would lead you to believe," Peterson said. "They were carrying ordinance and a huge amount of fuel when they were war planes, and that accounted for their reputation of difficult handling. This plane is easy to fly."

The Diamondback served her country until 1958 and then went on to appear in air races, winning the 1984 Unlimited

Gold Race at the Reno Air Races with a speed of 437.621 miles per hour, under the name Stiletto. Peterson bought and renamed the plane in 2005 and shows it at fly-ins every year.

Lessons are available at Joseph Airport, and it's considered one of the cheapest places to learn to fly.

Andy Mckee of Eagle Cap Flight School offers full instruction. Call the airport and leave a message at 541-263-2665 or email andy@eaglecapflight.com.

### High school program gaining speed

The North East Oregon Aviation Foundation is a new nonprofit dedicated to promoting aviation in northeast Oregon, particularly among high school students. This year's Fly-In raised \$2,000 for advancing that work and for scholarships. The first scholarship was given to Sebastian Hobbs of Lostine, who attended the Treasure Valley Community College aeronautics camp this month.

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