

# Flying over Creswell

*Creswell's Aviation Medical Examiner becomes a Pilot*  
by Richard A. Hansen, M.D., AME

From boyhood days, looking at the sky as one of those biplane crop dusters droned overhead, I looked forward to flying.

My father became a pilot, part owner of a Taylorcraft tail-dragger, which started with the shout of "contact" and a hard pull on the propeller. He enjoyed taking me for rides, tempering his enthusiasm for aerobatics in consideration of his son's rather delicate stomach.

Eventually, the responsibilities of parenthood and my mother's obvious lack of interest in small planes caused him to sell his part of the airplane, though I know he would have loved to pursue his fascination with flying, for Dad was an excellent aviator.

Decades later, now relocated in Creswell, Oregon, I found myself following in his footsteps. First it was a course in aerospace physiology, where we learned about altitude, pressures and our body reactions to flight as well as fright.

Becoming certified by the FAA as an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME), it seemed like the natural thing to learn more about flying. My wife, a true "dream maker," made it clear that she was happy for me to take the course...as long as it was only ground school! Unfortunately, with the Creswell Airport in view from my office window, it simply was impossible to ignore the occasional drone of vintage airplanes, taking off with a unique roar, or the thrilling sight of skydivers, floating down with their colorful parachutes decorating the azure sky.

One visit to the airport, and I found friendly pilots full of stories – of airplanes and flying adventures - and a contagious enthusiasm that couldn't help but enhance my interest for actual flying lessons.

There I met "Jug," a daily fixture at the airport, who everyone said was a World War II hero. He didn't say much about his distinguished honors with the military, or his civilian accomplishments either.

But the flight instructors and nearly everyone else treated him with deep respect, and I learned to do the same. His memory still lingers at the airport, with his name carved into two benches where others can sit and observe the runway happenings.

At Jug's memorial, an honor guard of local pilots flew the "missing man" formation, which we will long remember.

Although the Creswell airport is neither expansive nor elegant, it offers all that private pilots need, with two flying schools, staffed with cordial, competent and experienced pilot-instructors, hangars and skilled support services, including AvGas for less than you pay in Eugene.

Additionally, I found the aircraft mechanic shop well equipped to care for nearly every plane problem, from the annual inspection to major overhauls.

At Creswell, you may meet Steve Wolf, one of America's most respected acrobatic pilots, who builds some of the hottest biplanes in the country and teaches young adrenaline-craving pilots how to fly them.

Creswell's hangars house a wide variety of planes, from old vintage Stearmans to home-built fast-flying RV-6s to twin engine Barons, as well as a variety of high-wing Cessnas, still the most popular plane in general aviation.

You might ask why would anyone want to fly an airplane? For me, the urge to fly crystallized on that first discovery flight, when I caught a glimpse of the Sisters covered with snow, and Creswell, Springfield and Eugene from the air at 3,500 feet.

After a few hours of solo flight, I was privileged to fly to other airports and experience the thrill of landing in "far-away" places, navigating only by view of chart and countryside (called piloting) and the help of radio and instruments (called dead reckoning, which is short for "deduced"), meaning that the use of compass and navigation aids like VORs help point the way and guide the pilot to a proper airport.

It helps to correct for wind drift and compass variation, which we pilots early learn to do. Mount Hood came into view on clear days, as well as Washington's magnificent mountain peaks. There's no surpassing a view from the air if you like sightseeing.

A pilot gets a special feeling as his plane sails off the ground, and the student pilot realizes that he is actually flying.

I barely missed colliding with an eagle one afternoon over Pleasant Hill, but the magnificent bird maneuvered quickly out of the way and dropped below the plane to safety.

Hundreds of Canada geese also share the sky, but their honking cannot be heard above the drone of the plane's engine. You just have to see and avoid them, or hope they see you in time, for at 90 to 100 miles per hour, there is not much time to think about geese. Reaction time must be quick, in the air as well as during takeoffs and landings.

Meeting the students at Creswell, as well as experienced pilots, enthusiastic flight instructors and Air Traffic Controllers who come for their Aviation Medical Exam, has given me new appreciation of the caliber of men and women who frequent our "friendly skies."

They're all eager to sit in the left seat, as pilot-in-command, and actually fly their plane. Aviators are a great crowd, including our veterans, the "old-timers" who used to fly but now mostly attend gatherings such as the monthly EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) meetings that convene at the Creswell airport.

Our town even has a couple of flying families who have built their homes near the taxiway, and would like to see Creswell develop its own "airpark." Such subdivisions enhance several communities in Oregon as well as many other states. Learning aviation courtesy at the airport, especially in prescribed landing patterns, has enhanced my driving skill as well. I have developed a renewed appreciation for a seat belt and preflight checks of an airplane have made me more conscious of the preventive maintenance needed to drive a car safely.

I hope that Creswell will be producing many more pilots, with years of safe flying, enhanced airport facilities and growing camaraderie among pilots and support personnel. They are gracious and talented friends, from the managers and mechanics to the flight instructor teams to the privileged pilot-owners.

I'm pleased that our community supports such an asset.

As your local "flight surgeon," I could write much more about the fun of flying, the thrill of learning new skills or the people I have met at Creswell's Hobby Field airport. But time is precious, and so is the space in this paper. Besides, it's time to go flying. . .

*[Doctor Hansen, author of the popular book on home health care, **Get Well At Home**, currently serves as medical director of the **Emerald Valley Wellness Clinic**, and its **Live-for-Health Seminars** in Creswell, Oregon. Pilots who for health reason are having trouble passing their medical should contact us. For further information or inquiries, contact: [clinic1@emeraldwellness.com](mailto:clinic1@emeraldwellness.com)]*

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