

# PIREPS

## PIREPS

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For Comments/Questions, Contact

[david.morris@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.morris@nebraska.gov)

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## NEBRASKA

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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## Evelyn 'Sharpie' Sharp, arguably Nebraska's most famous aviator

By Jim McKee, Lincoln Journal Star, July 16, 2023 (Originally published Sept. 29, 2013)

Evelyn Genevieve "Sharpie" Sharp attended high school in Ord and though her entire career as a pilot lasted less than a decade, she became one of the most famous aviators in the state and was well-known over the entire country.

Although Mrs. Jack Atkinson or Harriet Long Stotts probably were the first female pilots in Nebraska, Sharpie was one of the earliest female pilots in Nebraska and the entire country.

Lois Genevieve Crouse was born Oct. 1, 1919, in Melstone, Mont., but two months later her then-unmarried mother gave her up for adoption to John E. and Mary Sharp of Kinsey, Mont., who then changed her name to Evelyn Genevieve Sharp. It was not until Evelyn was nearly an adult that she was told that the woman she knew as Aunt Elsie was indeed her biological mother.

Evelyn's interest in flying began as a child and when her mother realized the fascination, she gave her a copy of Amelia Earhart's biography.

Evelyn's father seemed always to have two or three different businesses in operation, but after his primary interest burned to the ground, the family moved to Hastings. In 1924, Sharp acquired a ranch homestead under the expansion of acreage allowed by the Kinkaid Act, and the family moved north but still in Nebraska. With the Great Depression, the Sharps sold the farm and moved into Ord, where John started a restaurant and operated a rooming/boarding house.

One of the Sharp's boarders was Jack Jeffords, who was a barnstorming



**Evelyn "Sharpie" Sharp is shown here in a photo probably taken when she was ferrying airplanes for the WAFS or WASPS in the early 1940s. Although never allowed to fly in combat situations, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron primarily moved airplanes from their point of manufacture or rebuilders on the West Coast to the East Coast before being shipped overseas.**

**Courtesy photo**

pilot and Certified Flight Instructor in Ord and Broken Bow. In 1934 or 1935, Jeffords gave Evelyn a ride, and she was hooked. When Jeffords fell behind in his rent he agreed to give Evelyn flying lessons in partial payment. The first lesson was Feb. 4, 1935, when Evelyn was only 16, but she managed to solo only a few days later on March 4 in an Aeronca C-3 though some records show the solo was not until 1936, a more probable scenario.

While still in her senior year of high school, Evelyn received her private pilot's license and became one of the

## Evelyn 'Sharpie' Sharp (Continued)

five charter members of the Nebraska 99, whose members were all female aviators. Evelyn graduated from Ord High School in 1937, where she was in the school band, taught swimming and received the title "best girl athlete."

At 18 Evelyn earned her commercial license, which enabled her to take passengers; her mother was first in line. Although she wanted to continue lessons, Jeffords moved away, leaving her without a teacher or an airplane.

John Sharp began lobbying his fellow Ord businessmen and with the help of Glen Auble, \$600 was raised as a down payment on a Taylor Cub, with the promise of repayment from proceeds of taking people for rides and generally aiding the community as needed. The plane was picked up in Omaha in August and flown back to Ord by Evelyn, with her father as passenger. When the Grand Island airport opened in 1937, Evelyn was the pilot of the first plane to land.

In 1938, Evelyn headed to Lincoln to attend the Lincoln Airplane & Flying School in order to get her Transport License. She may have flown from other fields as well, but primarily she

was said to have used the field that ran north and south from Van Dorn to Calvert streets, roughly along what is now 19th Street.

In 1938, Evelyn earned commercial license No. 34711, becoming "the world's youngest commercial pilot" and obtained a Curtis Robin OX-5 airplane that originally was owned by the infamous "Wrong Way" Corrigan. In May of that year, Evelyn flew the first airmail into Ord and became the first female airmail pilot in the United States.

As part of the Civilian Pilot Training Program, Evelyn began teaching flying in Spearfish, S.D., and later at Bakersfield, Calif. As one of only 10 female pilot instructors, she taught more than 350 men to fly in just more than a year.

When General H. "Hap" Arnold formed the WAFS or Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, Sharpie was assigned as the 17th member of the 2nd Flying Group at the New Castle Army Air Base in Wilmington, Del., in October of 1942. The WAFS were charged with flying planes from their manufacturer or rebuilder, mostly on

the West Coast, to shipping points, mostly on the East Coast but never to combat zones. The WAFS were merged into the WASPs in 1943.

On April 3, 1944, Squadron Commander Sharp, one of the most experienced women pilots in the country, had only three flights remaining to achieve the highest rating level available to women. She took off in a Lockheed twin engine P-38 from New Cumberland, Pa., on a delivery flight to California. Almost at once black smoke erupted from one of the engines that failed, causing a forced crash landing that killed Sharpie instantly.

Evelyn "Sharpie" Sharp was buried at Ord Cemetery, not far from the Ord Airport, now named Sharp Field on Nebraska 11, now renamed Evelyn Sharp Road. Every June the community remembers its most famous daughter as Evelyn Sharp Days and who, in 1992, was inducted into the Nebraska Aviation Hall of Fame.

Article reprinted with permission of The Lincoln Journal Star. ■



Barbara London (left) and Evelyn Sharp (right) preparing a P-51 for flight

# Aviation Education and Employment Opportunities



Jeremy Borrell

The vision statement of the Division of Aeronautics is “a dynamic aviation system which enhances the quality of life through infrastructure and services that meet the diverse and evolving needs of all Nebraskans.” In order for the system to provide the needed infrastructure and services, there is a need for qualified individuals to work within that system.

Currently, the demand for those qualified individuals is outstripping the supply. It is an outstanding time to be interested in participating in the aviation employment environment. I will highlight the diversity of options available and some avenues for young Nebraskans to pursue those opportunities.

All too often, when we think about careers in aviation, our minds immediately jump to flying professionally. While this is undoubtedly an outstanding career option with a forecasted shortage of pilots for the next several years, this is only one of the many opportunities. A quick search on major job hosting websites will bring back no less than 45 aviation-related positions available in Nebraska. There are open positions for entry-level individuals who want to be surrounded by aviation, and for those who have worked their entire careers in the aviation field but are looking for new opportunities to excel.

While the length of this article is insufficient to provide an exhaustive list, I will provide a sampling of some of the various opportunities. Nebraska has jobs available for Aircraft Maintenance Technicians (from small maintenance facilities to one of the largest Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities), Airport Managers and Operations Personnel (from small community airports to our Medium Hub, Eppley), Airport Design, Consultation and Construction (our system of airports is continuously being improved), Navigational Aids Technicians, various positions with Part 121 and 135 carriers, opportunities at part 61 and 141 flight schools, unmanned aircraft operators, aerial applicators, and opportunities with federal and state government. The Division of Aeronautics is currently seeking qualified individuals for several positions that can be found at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/nebraska>.

With all of the available job opportunities, the next logical question is “how does an individual get started down the path of an aviation career?” Exposure to aviation is a perfect starting point. This will help determine the level of interest. Several programs provide aviation exposure to youth and young adults, such as the Civil Air Patrol and the Experimental Aviation Association’s Young Eagles Program.

Beyond exposure, the next step is education, which is beginning to be offered at high school programs around the state. Schools such as Grand Island Senior High, Lincoln North Star, Gering, and Omaha Burke offer programs focused on flight training, unmanned aerial systems and aviation maintenance. These programs are an excellent opportunity for young adults to get a baseline of knowledge and a head start on the educational path required for the skilled trades found in aviation.

Beyond these high school programs, there are many educational paths to follow. University programs, vocational schools, apprenticeships and the military are some of the available pathways to develop the knowledge and skills to secure in-demand jobs with the potential for career advancement and competitive wages. It should also be noted that there are numerous scholarship and tuition assistance programs available that should be explored.

Please continue to spread the word about the great opportunities that exist within our community! ■





# Becker Flying Service Continues 75-Year Tradition

By Gail Becker



Gail and Tom Becker in front of their home.

Becker Flying Service, Inc. is a distinguished family-owned business that has been operating since 1948 in Hartington, Neb. Spanning three generations of the Becker family, the company has a rich history rooted in providing aerial spraying services to the local farming community. Bud and Esther Becker, who established the business, created a shop, hangar and two runways on their farm north of Hartington to support their operations.

Bud trained his second son, Steve, to become a skilled pilot, and when their oldest son, Tom, returned from service, both brothers joined the family venture, offering their assistance during spray seasons. Later, Chuck, their fourth son, also became involved in the business. As the demand for their spraying services grew in the 70s, the operations outgrew the farm and were relocated to the Hartington Airport, where the company remains operational today.

However, tragedy struck in 1986 when Steve Becker, 36, lost his life in a helicopter crash. Despite this devastating loss, the family displayed remarkable resilience, carrying on

with their duties and successfully managing the spray operations.

In 2001, the already thriving spraying business underwent further diversification with the establishment of an aircraft maintenance division. This new division offered flight



Bud and Esther Becker established Becker Flying Service, Inc. in 1948.

training and aircraft rental services. Presently, Becker Flying Service, Inc. employs a full-time mechanic and services nearly 100 planes annually, catering to customers as far as Rapid City and Omaha.

The company firmly believes in the guiding principle that “a properly maintained aircraft is a safe aircraft.”

In 2003, Tom acquired the spraying business from his father and also took charge of managing the Wayne Municipal Airport in Wayne, Nebraska. The Wayne location serves as a secondary hub for aircraft maintenance, flight training and aerial spraying operations.

Tom’s motto, “surround yourself with great people, and you will achieve success,” has been instrumental in shaping the company’s growth. He firmly believes that he has assembled an exceptional team at Becker Flying Service, Inc., continuing the family tradition.

Working alongside his father, John Becker, Tom’s son, is the third-generation operator of the company. John holds the positions of Vice President, assists with daily operations, and serves as the Chief Pilot for aerial spraying. Tom’s wife, Gail Becker, and daughter, Janelle Becker, handle the booking of spray acres, create computer maps for the pilots, and manage the aerial application billing. Karma Schulte, who has been with the company for over twenty-one years, oversees day-to-day operations and serves as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Scott Carr, a certified A.I. and Director of Maintenance, brings extensive experience to his role. Scott also holds his commercial pilot license and assists with aerial spraying operations.

Over the years, aerial spraying at Becker Flying Service, Inc. has undergone significant transformations. From Bud’s early days of spraying using a 1946 J-3 Cub with a capacity of 40 gallons of chemical and water, the company now operates two Cessna 188 aircraft, each capable of carrying 200 gallons, three Ayres 510 Thrush aircraft with a capacity of 510 gallons each, and a Piper PA-25-235 that holds 150 gallons.

Becker Flying Service, Inc. has assembled a highly qualified team of insured and licensed full-time and part-time aerial applicators to cater to all application needs. Leveraging computer mapping and guidance systems, the company ensures precise and high-quality application that meets the unique requirements of each individual field.

With a 75-year history of exceptional customer service and unwavering dedication to its pilots and the local farming community, Becker Flying Service, Inc. takes great pride in its heritage. This commitment to excellence has been passed down through the generations within the Becker family. ■

# U.S. Representative Adrian Smith: Leadership and Innovation in Aviation

By Matt Hoffmann, KTIV, Published: May. 26, 2023

Air travel in the United States is on the rise in 2023. According to a survey by Forbes Advisor, 49 percent of Americans plan to travel more in 2023 than they did in 2022. However, we have seen a number of challenges accompany this increase in demand, particularly during the summer travel season.

The modern marvel of commercial aviation allows for travel across our country and around the globe. Air transportation isn't just about traditional ticketed passengers – general aviation and air cargo are also critical components of our economy.

As airports and airlines have struggled to manage greater demand, travelers have become all too familiar with disruptions in flight plans. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, more than 1-in-5 flights have been affected by delays this year. Furthermore, with the added challenges of staffing and pilot shortages, weather-related delays are more difficult to troubleshoot. These factors underscore the need for improvement and innovation in the aviation industry.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), each day 45,000 flights carrying 2.9 million passengers are served by the national airspace system (NAS) – a network administering equipment, facilities, services, and manpower in American domestic and oceanic airspace.

Congress considers legislation to reauthorize the FAA every five years, and we last enacted comprehensive FAA legislation in 2018. The deadline for FAA reauthorization is September 30 of this year. This week I supported the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act. This important legislation to reauthorize FAA passed on

a 351-69 overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, and I'm glad the House came together to ensure our nation's aviation system has the resources and stability necessary to serve Americans.

In a dynamic and rapidly growing field, commonsense policy is needed to keep pace with aerospace innovations. This legislation streamlines the safe and efficient testing of new technologies, such as Advanced Air Mobility, have the potential to change our everyday lives and help the U.S. compete globally.

To enhance the experience for the traveling public, the House bill also includes improvements to air traffic control systems and infrastructure. By increasing annual funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and cutting red tape, airports across the country – including the ones serving Nebraska's Third District – will be able to better maintain and improve their facilities for passengers and airlines. Additionally, the bill invests in aviation workforce growth and paves the way for much-needed

updates in air travel safety administration.

As the birthplace of flight, the United States has long been on the leading edge of aeronautical advancements. According to an FAA report, the aviation sector contributes to over five percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the NAS is on track to facilitate travel for 1 billion passengers this year.

Maintaining the valuable economic impact, scientific leadership and high safety standards of the American aviation industry are critical to continued success and innovation in American aviation.. ■



U.S. Representative Adrian Smith

# Blood Sweat & Lears

By Kim J Stevens

I didn't set out to collect ball caps! In fact, I seldom wear them. But over the years I've picked up a few here and there. Not too long ago I was sorting through some of my aviation stuff and found a large tub full of hats. I realized I had enough hats to open a haberdashery – almost ninety of them!

As I was scratching my head – sans cap, trying to come to grips with how this happened, I realized it wasn't so much the number of hats that surprised me but the impact that each represented. Each hat was special, and with each came a flood of memories, some with a smile, others with an outright laugh!

One of my first and all-time favorites is Blood Sweat & Lears, a cap I picked up from Duncan Aviation in Lincoln, Neb., soon after my career in state aviation began. Another favorite is the Bad Boys Club, provided by Diane Hofer, who at the time was the State Airport Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Aeronautics. This cap is special in that it is only one of a handful that were specially made and

delivered to a select crew that somehow found themselves part of an exclusive club within the ranks of state aviation officials.

Many of the hats, Planet Hollywood (Washington, DC), APTEch, Beijing Olympics, Pan Am, Fly Nebraska, remind me of special times, special people and special places. Although most are aviation-oriented, I have special caps from the sports world, too. Plenty of Nebraska caps of course. I have a Creighton University baseball cap from the year they went to the College World Series, as well as a CBS Sports Final Four cap that I picked up in Denver, while attending the basketball event.

Of course, if you were to ask me now, which one I favor, it would have to be *the State Aviation Journal*. Who would have thought!

*Kim Stevens is a former Director of the Division of Aeronautics and publisher of the State Aviation Journal-AVED Magazine. Check out his blog at Sky View. ■*

## 24-Month Wait – There's Good Reason for It

AOPA News

"Cerebrovascular disease" covers a spectrum of brain pathology that includes aneurysms, brain bleeds, tumors, and strokes or transient ischemic attacks (TIA). These conditions pose a risk for impairment or incapacitation that understandably makes the FAA more conservative.

The basic neurologic evaluation is an office evaluation with a board-certified neurologist, and, depending upon the actual medical history, imaging studies would be needed along with the treatment and hospital records. Determining the risk for a subsequent event is challenging, and that is how the FAA operates—determining an acceptable level of risk that keeps the system safe.

In the case of stroke or TIA, the risk for a subsequent event is still there, and the FAA often requires a 24-month recovery and stabilization period before one can be considered for special issuance. Pilots with this history are often caught off guard by this seemingly onerous recovery time, but there is sound logic behind it.

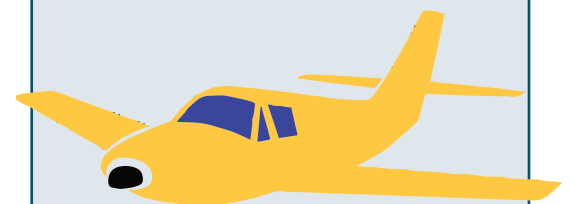
Not all strokes present the same way; some are very mild with symptoms no worse than tingling in the fingers or a mild but fast-recovering muscle weakness. Other symptoms can be much more dramatic such as speech impairment, loss of motor function on one side of the body, visual deficits, or worse. The FAA wait time of 24 months provides the patient with plenty of time to recover neurologically from the deficits that resulted from the event.

Neurocognitive testing for pilots is controversial in the aerospace medicine community, and the FAA is reevaluating the situations in which the testing would be required, but most cases involving the potential for neurologic deficit will require the assessment as part of the review process.

*Article Reprinted from Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association – AOPA News ■*

## Airport Of The Year Airport Project Of The Year

The NDOT – Division of Aeronautics is now accepting nominations for [Airport of the Year](#) and [Airport Project of the Year](#). Nominations need to be received at the Division of Aeronautics by December 31, 2023. Instructions are on the forms for mailing or e-mailing the nominations.





# Kearney Fly-In Event Provides Phenomenal Experience for Visitors

By Annette Kirchoff, Kearney Flight Services

Kearney – the heart of Nebraska – where sandhill cranes migrate in the spring and fall to where the sunrise and sunsets are always awe-inspiring and never painted the same. This town hosted their first Fly-In Event in more than a decade with phenomenal support from numerous groups and individuals.

The event took place on Saturday, July 8, from 8-11 a.m., with the local Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapter #1091 serving up one of the best mouthwatering breakfasts in the Midwest, and with many static airplanes strategically placed on the apron around the hangar. Some were local and a few flew in special for the event.

Kearney Flight Services Airport Director Jim Lynaugh was in contact with the Nebraska Army National Guard for months planning the arrival of the Chinook helicopter. This was a highlight for many visitors, as they could walk through and talk with the pilots about every aspect of their mission with the helicopter. Other helicopters on site that day were staged by Apollo and Air Methods, which are air medical transportation companies. They, too, were gracious to let spectators climb in and ask questions regarding their services.

A local Sovereign jet owned by the Buckle sat proudly on the ramp for viewing. The Buckle, Inc. has over 400 stores across the US selling top brand clothing for men and women, and it all began right here in Kearney, Neb., by the Hirschfeld family.

Another top spotlight on our ramp was having UNK Aviation display one of their flight training planes. This program is led by Dan Smith and Captain Al Spain and attracts students from all over the globe. The eight Junior ROTC flight students were on site in their tactical jumpsuits to talk about their rigorous eight-week training program. These young adults are very impressive and eager to learn the aviation industry.



Above-Fly-In guests had the opportunity to tour the local hospital Air Care, Inc. helicopter on display.

Right-Annette Kirchoff, Kearney Airport Office Manager, left, visits with Fly-In guest, Rich Meyer, a Kearney resident and aviation enthusiast



Among others that graced the ramp were Air Tractors, Cessnas, experimental aircraft, and even a FedEx Caravan. Spectators flew in from Omaha, Lincoln, Cairo and Hastings (to name a few) to participate in the show, and Kearney Flight Services appreciates their support.

During the morning, Assistant Airport Director Steve Cole joined Office Manager Annette Kirchoff for the drawing of tickets for the door prizes. There were 11 winners who walked away with either a basket full of Kearney Flight Service swag, including a Yeti, golf balls, polo shirt, and a notebook, or a gift certificate to one of our four local restaurants. The \$50 gift cards were graciously donated by Younes Hospitality, which included Cunningham's Journal, Fyre, Coppermill, and Angus Burger restaurants. All these eateries are top notch and some of the best in the community!

Kearney Flight Services is growing and flourishing with a host of services that suits many needs. Thank you to everyone who participated and took the time out of their busy schedules to join us for what will become an Annual Fly-In here at Kearney Regional Airport!! ■.



Kearney Flight Services line crew, l to r: Steve Cole, Shu Masuda, Kollin Lewis, Ethan Osborn, Hameed Hosseini and Greg Markus



## 2023 BRENNER FIELD

3301 Business Parkway • Falls City, NE 68355  
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Training for First Responders, pilots,  
and aviation authorities.

Training will cover.....

- Who is in charge of an accident site and the responsibilities in preserving the site.
- What to report to the NTSB and FAA.
- Discussion of hazmat, fuel types, and high pressure devices, that are a threat.
- Address the danger of Skrdrol hydraulic fluid, agricultural chemicals and unblown airbags.
- Discuss aircraft ballistic parachute systems and the dangers they pose to first responders.
- Go over the danger of burned composite materials and carbon fiber.
- Discuss how to open doors, windows on several common GA aircraft, as well as how to shut down engines, turn off mags, fuel, and electrical.
- Hearing about past Nebraska accidents and lessons learned.

# Fly in **SEPTEMBER 9** BREAKFAST

## FAA FIRST RESPONDERS TRAINING

**BREAKFAST SERVED - 8am - 11am**

Free will donation, proceeds go to the Jaycees

Located in the Ahern Aviation Hangar

**FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING - 10AM - 11:30AM**

by FAA Inspector Mark Gaffney  
Brenner Field Corporate Hangar



Falls City  
Airport Authority



Falls City  
Partners in  
Education



## Events Calendar

Please check the Aeronautics web page for a list of upcoming aviation events.

York Airport (KJYR)  
EAA Chapter 1055 Fly-in breakfast  
(free-will donation) on the  
1st Saturday of the month,  
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Crete Airport (KCEK)  
EAA Chapter 569 Fly-in breakfast  
on the 3rd Saturday of every month,  
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.  
Suggested donation:  
\$10 for adults; \$5 for kids

3rd Thursday Pilot Lunch  
Jams – Midtown  
7814 West Dodge Road,  
Omaha, NE 68114

Third Thursday of each month at  
11:00 a.m.

Nebraska Chapter of the Antique  
Airplane Association hamburger  
cookout (free-will donation)  
last Saturday of the month,  
May-October  
11:30-1:00pm at KHSI  
Hastings Municipal Airport.

Applejack Fly-in  
Nebraska City Airport  
September 17, 2023  
7:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Adults 12+ \$8.00, Kids 4-12 \$4.00  
Pilots & Children Under 3 Free

Brenner Fly-in Breakfast  
September 9, 2023  
8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
3301 Business Parkway,  
Falls City, Nebraska 68355  
402-245-3715

Letters requesting applications for  
the 2025 or 2026 Nebraska State  
Fly-In have been mailed to all  
Nebraska Airports.  
Application deadline is Friday,  
September 22, 2023. For more  
information, please contact Diane  
Bartels, DBSharpie@aol.com .  
402-429-3342