

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



Hartley Haines

It was Chuck Yeager who once said, "There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old bold pilots."

But one old pilot who is still pretty bold is Hartley Haines of Negaunee - he was still flying high at 76 years of age.

The retired accountant for Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co. doesn't fly as much as he used to. Not so many years ago, Haines would go up every day after work. Now he only goes up once a week, but the kick he gets from doing it is still

fresh.

He still remembers what got him hooked on flying. When he was a boy, two veteran pilots, Ernie Berg and Clyde Lee, took him up in their biplanes.

Then at Negaunee High School, where his son now teaches, Haines and four other students formed an aviation club in 1928. It was a full-fledged extracurricular activity, with the late Lorraine A. Barnaby - then a teacher at the high school - as their advisor.

To get the club off the ground, the five built their own glider, which they flew off of Teal Lake in the wintertime. They'd hitch it up to a car which would take off across the ice to generate sufficient speed for whoever was flying at the time to become airborne.

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Once sufficient altitude was reached, the towline would be disconnected and pilot and glider would spiral down to the frozen lake surface below.

“We had all made models and knew how to handle it very well,” Haines said.

Eventually they went together and made the craft a true airplane, mounting a two-cylinder, 40-hp motorcycle engine in the nose. The high wing configuration and snow sled skids for landing gear were kept.

The young pilots could reach altitudes of 300-400 feet in their homemade glider-turned-airplane and generally stayed right around the Negaunee area.

If they wanted to, they could take the plane other places as well. There was no shortage of airfields in the county in those days. After all, all it took to accommodate most of the airplanes back then was a clear, level piece of ground. Almost any farmer’s field would do. And the county had three full-fledged airfields, as well.

In fact, Haines was one of the first to land at what is now Marquette County Airport. He remembers seeing the stumps from the freshly cut trees.

Back then, anyone who flew was considered a pioneer, especially if they did it in an airplane they built themselves, so naturally, the Aviation Club was a breed set apart. The other students at Negaunee High tended to look up to them in more than a physical sense.

“You were considered somewhat unusual, a little bit different,” Haines said. “We were thought of as being a little braver than average, but what we did we were careful about.”

The group continued to move upward in their development when they all pitched in and bought a Curtis-Wright airplane in 1930 for \$300. It was a high-wing monoplane with a 40-foot wingspan, an open cockpit and a three-cylinder engine.

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The group picked it up cheap because it had been wrecked and was rebuilt by its former owners as a condition of the youngsters buying the aircraft.

The plane was of a “pusher” type configuration. That is, the engine was mounted behind the pilot, just behind the wing, much like many of the present-day ultralights.

But most importantly, since its engine was specifically designed for flying, it could attain much higher altitudes than the club’s homemade glider-airplane could. Climbing to 4,000 to 6,000 feet, it reached an altitude more than 10 times higher than they could go before.

Eventually Haines came to own the plane himself, and sold it before it was wrecked in a hanger during a tornado late in the Thirties.

The Curtis-Wright was a bit more complicated to fly than the homemade plane, so they got Sig Wilson to teach them how to fly.

Wilson was one of the mainstays of early aviation in Marquette County and taught many early pilots how to fly in their own airplanes. Now Haines is a teacher himself, who still gives flight lessons and is currently teaching a couple students how to fly. He even taught his son how to fly.

Haines went on to become a more accomplished pilot over the years, earning his private license in 1938, followed by his commercial license in 1944 and his flight instructor’s license in 1946. Haines was too old for service in the second World War, but did fly in the Civil Air Patrol. In fact, licenses weren’t even required until the late Thirties, so Haines even predates them.

As a matter fact, Haines has been flying longer than the FAA has been around. Back when Haines started, the air was governed by the Civil Aviation Authority.

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One thing that has stayed fresh over the years is the thrill of flying.

“The best part of it is just getting up there and being away from it all,” Haines said. “The U.P. is pretty country (from the air). It’s more crowded up there (than before), but it’s pretty well controlled.”

He can never remember being scared when flying, “but there were a few times when I was kind of concerned. Usually if you have any trouble in the air it’s because of the weather,” he said.

Aviation has gotten more expensive, too. Back when Haines started you could take off on a shoestring budget; nowadays it takes thousands of dollars. That’s one reason why his grandson, a Northern Michigan University student, hasn’t become the third generation in the air.

“He’s going to college and nowadays that’s pretty expensive, too,” Haines said.

It may hardly seem possible that someone can fly for 60 years, but Haines’ love of aviation proves one thing: When you fall in love with piloting, time flies.

Al Hunt
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