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COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT



**Lewis Clark Air Festival Sept. 20**  
Schedule of Events on page 2  
**Historical Airplane Rides**  
Tickets for sale page 3

Special Supplement to the Lewiston Tribune



# Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Celebrates 70th Year



**William Vern McCann, Jr.**  
Chair



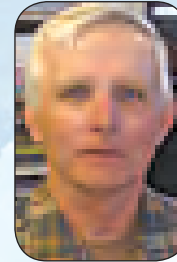
**Mike Martin**  
Vice Chairman



**Chris Hayes**  
Commissioner



**Pat Nuxoll**  
Treasurer



**Verl Long**  
Secretary



It is my honor to welcome you to the celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport. Our airport is a vital part of the Lewis-Clark Valley and of our region and provides the opportunity to begin or end a trip to or from any place in the world.

We are proud of the fact that we have many solid tenants on our airport and that approximately 120,000 passengers come and go through our terminal annually. With many of those passengers come family members either to see them off or to greet them, which increases the traffic flow at the terminal.

We are also proud of the fact that we have two national airlines represented at the airport, Delta Airlines/SkyWest Airlines and Alaska Airlines. We feel fortunate in a community our size to have two national carriers.

We are also proud of all the tenants and that many of them are part of the airport's history. The Zimmerly family established an airline that operated from the valley and received the first commercial airline certificate in the country. One of the initial investors in Zimmerly Airlines was the Wagner family, which has many family members still in our community. The Gustin family is a long-known name in aviation in the Lewis-Clark area, as is the Wilson family that operates under the Hillcrest name.

In the spring of 2010, the City of Lewiston and the County of Nez Perce entered into a Joint Powers Agreement creating the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Authority. The new entity took control of the airport Oct. 1, 2010. Mike Martin, Verl Long, Pat Nuxoll, Chris Hayes and myself comprised that initial Authority and still sit as members of the board. It has been our goal to provide stability for the tenants and employees of the airport and also to promote the airport and prepare it for the future.

Pat Nuxoll has done an excellent job handling the finances for the airport, and with the help of the City and County we have completed many projects left undone in the past. The parking lot was seal-coated and striped last year, the first time it had been done since the early 80's. A bathroom was installed in the security area, which is appreciated by all of those who arrive a little early for their flights.

We also have recently completed an approximately \$4.5 million overlay of runway 8-26, the longer of our two runways. That, together with many improvements in our facility and the

equipment it takes to maintain the airport, have all been part of the implementation of good business practices by the Airport Authority.

As time goes on, changes are made. We were honored to have had Robin Turner serve as our manager for thirty years, during which time there was growth in the airport and the addition of another airline. Robin exercised his opportunity to retire in May, and we were fortunate to find a new manager, Bruce MacLachlan, who had worked in the Northwest previously.

Bruce had primarily an operations background but was recently certified as an airport manager by the American Association of Airport Executives. Bruce took over the reins of the airport May 8 and has done a good job of getting us through the runway 8-26 repaving project. He will oversee many future projects, including the completion of our Airport Master Plan.

One could not talk about the airport without mentioning Friends of the Airport, the excellent support group that has been in existence since 2010. The Friends - DeAnn Scrabeck, Doug Black, Leroy Chausse, Jim Otey and more recently Sandi Lee and Joe Hulett - have assisted Ralph and Paula Stout of Stout Flying Service in planning this year's Air Festival. They have provided significant assistance in helping market the airport in our region, all with no compensation.

We also would like to recognize and thank Doug Mattoon and Valley Vision for helping market the new areas on the south side of our airport.

One of our latest accomplishments that you might see at the corner of 4th Street D and Bryden Avenue is a new lighted sign showing the main entrance to the airport. Surprisingly, that entrance has been unmarked for many years.

On behalf of the staff, the Friends of the Airport and the members of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Authority, I would like to extend an invitation to you to attend the 70th Anniversary Celebration of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Sept. 20, 2014.

Sincerely,

**William Vern McCann Jr.**  
Chair



## Lewis-Clark Air Festival Saturday, September 20 Schedule of Events

**7:30 am - 5:00 pm**

• Gates Open

**7:30 am**

• Transportation Available to/from the E.A.A.

**8:00 am - 5:00 pm**

• DC-3 and P-51 and other Aircraft Static Displays

**7:30 am - 10:30 am**

• E.A.A. Breakfast

**10:00 am - Opening Ceremony**

• Invocation - Pastor John Stroupe, Emmanuel Baptist Church

• Welcome

• Presentation of Colors

• National Anthem - Paula Stout

• Jumpers with Flag Drop

• Photo Opportunity of P-51 Flyby

• Fallen Soldiers Salute

• Zimmerly Family Presentation

**10:00 am - 5:00 pm**

• DC-3 Rides

• Helicopters Rides

• Gustin Aviation Maintenance Demo

• Skydivers

• Static Displays with Idaho National Guard

• Crop Dusters

• FedEx

• Hillcrest Aviation

• Lewiston Police & Fire Depts.

**11:30 am-1:00 pm**

• Sheriff's Air Posse Lunch

**2:00 pm**

• Hillcrest Helicopter Demonstration

**2:30 pm**

• Crop Dusting Demonstration

**5:00 pm**

Gates Close



## Lewiston-Nez Perce County Airport is Major Contributor to Economy

The Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport generates nearly \$55 million in yearly economic activity. Moreover, 519 jobs are tied to the airport, representing a \$15 million annual payroll, according to a study commissioned by the Idaho Transportation Department Division of Aeronautics.

Statewide, according to the 2009 study, the annual output of airports is \$2.1 billion. There are 23,000 airport-connected jobs with a total payroll of \$718 million.

The study identifies direct benefits to the Lewiston-Clarkston region of \$34.1 million per year and extended benefits of \$20.6 million. Direct economic benefits are measured as the combined output of businesses operating at the airport, while extended benefits derive from visitor-related expenditures, according to the study.

The study was done prior to completion of a new airport south

side industrial park that is being marketed nationwide. Much of the funding for that development came from the U.S. Economic Development Agency and the Idaho Department of Commerce. The Federal Aviation Administration also has contributed many millions of dollars to airport improvements over the years, most recently toward resurfacing the primary runway.

The valley's excellent year-around flying weather, which allows air traffic to flow when nearby or larger airports are closed because of fog or snow, is noted in the 2009 study, as is the availability of two runways suitable for large corporate jets and commercial air carriers.

The airport also has an air traffic control tower.

FedEx and UPS both utilize the 70-year-old airport. FedEx operates a shipping center next to the terminal building, while UPS handles daily charter air freight shipments

from Seattle. Delta/SkyWest provides twice-daily service to Salt Lake City, and Alaska/Horizon Air offers daily flights to Boise and twice-daily flights to Seattle. Charter flights make frequent stops, and the airport has a small but busy general aviation clientele.

Hillcrest Aircraft Co. provides a broad range of helicopter services, Gustin Aviation performs major maintenance on fixed-wing aircraft, especially aerial application planes from all over the West, and Stout Flying Service is a base for just about everything else, including fuel, flight instruction and charters. Life Flight, an air ambulance service, maintains both a helicopter and a fixed wing aircraft at the



airport.

Numerous small businesses are among the tenants on the airport, selling fuel, renting cars and offering travel and cosmetology services. A small convenience store in the terminal building furnishes everything from souvenirs to books to snacks.

The Nez Perce County Sheriff's Air Posse has a hangar on the airport, as do the Civil Air Patrol and a chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association.

## Pepsi of Lewiston Sponsoring Rides on Historic Airplane at Air Festival



*Courtesy of Heritage of Flight Museum*

People may walk through the restored Pan-Am DC-3 next Saturday at the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Air Festival. Tickets for a 30-minute ride also are available.

Rides on an historic airplane that seven decades ago flew the treacherous route over the Himalayan Mountains called "the Hump" will be available next week at the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport.

The restored Douglas Pan-Am DC-3 is being brought to Lewiston as part of the airport's 70th anniversary air festival through the sponsorship of Pepsi of Lewiston.

A limited number of tickets for 30-minute rides are being sold for \$325 to help defray the costs to the Historic Flight Foundation Museum at Everett, Wash., which now owns the aircraft.

Rides will be given both Friday and Saturday. Tickets are available at Stout Flying Service at the airport or by calling the office at (208) 743-8408 or Ralph Stout at (208) 305-8408.

The twin-engine DC-3 is considered an icon to modern aviation. Its speed and range revolutionized early commercial air transport. The military version, the C-47, played a vital role in World War II. Almost exactly 70 years ago, squadrons of C-47's hauled paratroopers from bases in England to coastal France at the start of the D-Day invasion.

## STRIPE-A-LOT Pavement Striping & Seal Coating Including Airport Runways



Since 1996, Stripes-A-Lot has been in the business of saving you money with its full-service attention to asphalt maintenance. Owner Glenn Scharnhorst serves the Lewis-Clark Valley and the surrounding area by offering asphalt seal coating, parking lot

striping, patching potholes, doing highway center lines and airport runway striping. Recreational court striping, ADA parking and compliance signs are also available. Need old stripes removed? Stripes-A-Lot can do that too.



**(509) 758-0570** Clarkston, Washington



# William Hughes: Considered Father of Valley's Modern Airport



*Courtesy of the Nez Perce County Historical Society*

William P. Hughes, Lewiston city engineer from 1923 to 1952, has been credited with being largely responsible for creation of a modern airport at Lewiston.

William Parker Hughes, Lewiston's city engineer for almost three decades, could justifiably be called the father of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport. He selected the site for the airport and guided its financing, design and construction.

Prior to that, in 1933, he and his department had helped the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce build the city's first airport, a set of two gravel airstrips and a hangar located west of Fourth Street and Warner Avenue in the Lewiston Orchards.

While working on this rudimentary first airport, Hughes developed an enthusiasm for aviation based on what he saw as its commercial possibilities. But it is apparent from records and newspaper articles that he realized the first facility was too small to satisfy the longer-term needs of the community.

Commenting in 1936 on what the city would need to do to obtain federal funds for airport development, Hughes wrote: "... the present field would have to be abandoned and a 200-acre tract adjoining on the south purchased ..."

A second early airport in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley was constructed in Clarkston in 1934-35 as a Works Progress Administration project. Hughes saw it as an impediment to the development of a "real" airport in Lewiston.

He doubted that the Civil Aeronautics Authority, which authorized the construction of new airports, would support two airports in such close proximity, and he saw the Clarkston airport's single runway as a critical inadequacy.

Believing that the CAA eventually would recognize and act upon Clarkston's shortcomings, Hughes was willing to wait. His patience was rewarded, for in late 1940 Clarkston received the following response to a request for additional CAA support for its airport:

"Further development (of the Clarkston facility) warrants only limited additional investment until an adequate all-way field could be



available to replace it."

In that same letter, the CAA encouraged the city of Lewiston to proceed with land acquisition for a new airport.

Then, in early 1941, the CAA wrote a follow-up letter, this time to the Lewiston mayor, saying, "If asked, the CAA will respond favorably to a proposal to build an air field next to the city." This got the ball rolling. A purchase option was obtained for the land and engineering surveys completed. Hughes forwarded a formal proposal to the CAA, and the agency approved it almost immediately.

The next step was to secure financing. The CAA approved projects, but it provided no funding. Hughes compiled a construction cost estimate and submitted it to the WPA. The WPA review consumed the remainder of 1941, but then, at the end of January 1942, Hughes received the following telegram:

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL GIVEN THIS MORNING TO LEWISTON AIRPORT PROJECT. SPONSOR FUND \$134,523. FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION \$420,304. TOTAL \$554,827. CONGRATULA-

TIONS.

COMPTON I. WHITE  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Interestingly, the congressman addressed his telegram to Hughes rather than to the mayor or the city council, supporting the view held by some that Hughes had become more than the city engineer; he was the de facto city manager.

The \$134,523 matching "sponsor fund" apparently was to be shared by the city of Lewiston and Nez Perce County as the project was a joint city-county venture.

Construction began within a month after Hughes received the telegram. However, with the construction work about 80 percent complete, President Roosevelt in December 1942 abolished the WPA. Virtually overnight, federal funding for the airport evaporated, and Hughes' resiliency and ingenuity were severely tested.

Because the country was by then fully engaged in World War II, Hughes realized to finish the project, he would have to persuade the CAA that the airport was essential to the war effort.

The Army had already considered and rejected the planned

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Leave Twin Falls at 2:45—Arrive Boise 3:45  
Leave Boise at 4:00—Arrive Lewiston 4:45 P.M.T.  
Leave Lewiston at 8:00 P.M.T.—Arrive Boise 10:45  
Leave Boise at 11:15—Arrive Twin Falls 12:15

<p><b>FARES</b></p> <p>Twin Falls to Boise—\$11.50 Round Trip ————\$20.75</p> <p>Boise to Lewiston ———\$15.00 Round Trip ————\$27.00</p> <p>Twin Falls to Lewiston \$26.50 Round Trip ————\$47.50 <small>(All fares plus 15% Federal Tax)</small></p>	<p><b>★ Baggage</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>25 POUND LIMIT</small></p> <p><b>EXCESS BAGGAGE</b> Excess baggage, 1/2 of 1% of one way fare. Please use very small bags because of limited space.</p>
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**ZIMMERLY AIR TRANSPORT**

—Serving Idaho People with an Intra-State Service—

Zimmerly Air Transport at Lewiston advertises inaugural flights serving Twin Falls, Boise and Lewiston. This advertisement appeared in the Times News and Boise Statesman on July 21, 1944, according to a handwritten notation.





*Courtesy of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport*

The first airport building in the Lewiston Orchards, a hangar built prior to construction of the present airport, still stands on Fourth Street near Warner Avenue.

new airport as a potential airfield, so Hughes turned to the Navy, emphasizing Lewiston's good year-around flying weather. This apparently resonated with the Naval officers charged with evaluating the site, for they expressed interest in using the new airport as a training base for bombers. Navy authorities urged the CAA not only to fund the completion of the airport but also to extend the length of the two runways. The CAA quickly agreed to assume the WPA's "obligation."

Funding obtained, the Navy's interest in the new airport as a training site quickly vanished in favor of a base at Pasco, with its nearby Boardman bombing range. That didn't stop progress, however.

The "Lewiston Idaho Airport," as it was first called, was dedicated on July 29, 1944.

Hughes was painfully aware of the vast amount of additional work that remained and the financial support that would be required. The city and county owned the skeleton of an airport. To transform it into a full-bodied aviation center would require eight more years and many more dollars.

Hughes continued to play a key role in the second phase of the airport's development. Initially, there was a strong sense of urgency because Lewiston was competing with Boise to serve as operations headquarters for Empire Airlines,

a regional air carrier that had started in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley as Zimmerly Airlines.

Empire Airlines had received a certificate from the CAB granting it authority to carry passengers, cargo and mail. The CAB's view was that Empire, as a financially vulnerable new business, should establish its base of operations at an airport where hangar space and other necessary services would be immediately available.

The Lewiston airport offered only runways. The Boise airport, having served as an Army Air Corps base during the war, possessed all the essential ingredients.

Much to Hughes' disappointment—but certainly not to his surprise—Lewiston lost the competition.

Starting in 1946 and working closely with the CAA office in Seattle, Hughes began to assemble the many additional components the airport required. He obtained war surplus lighting and radio navigation systems. The airport itself purchased a rotating beacon. Then, in a major coup, Hughes persuaded the National Weather Service to establish a full-time weather station in Lewiston.

The financing and construction of a much-needed administration building progressed far more slowly. The building finally was dedicated on June 1, 1952.



*Ted Cowin Photo/Courtesy of Nez Perce County Historical Society*

The present Stout Flying Service hangar, then Hillcrest Aircraft Co., is at the center of this photo believed to have been taken about 1948 during a flight over the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport. The airport, with its intersecting runways, was about four years old and the Lewiston Orchards was sparsely populated. Below, World War II era aircraft are parked in front of the hangar, which is still a hub of airport activity.



*Courtesy of Ronald Gustin*

Then, in a shocking turn of events only 36 days after the dedication of the new administration building, the Lewiston City Council, instead of commissioning a plaque to acknowledge Hughes' iconic role in creating the airport, abruptly dismissed him. No official reason was given for his termination.

Hughes completed his career in Boise as a highly regarded engineer for what was then called the

Idaho Highway Department. He retired at the end of 1958.

The author gratefully acknowledges the following sources: the Lewiston Tribune, the Spokane Daily Chronicle, and, most especially, Robin L. Turner and his *Flying the Golden Years: A History of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport*.



# Stout Flying Service Started with a Genesee Boy Who Loved Airplanes



*Courtesy of Barry Kough/ Tribune*  
Ralph and Paula Stout own Stout Flying Service, in many ways a hub of activities on the airport.

It's the all-American boy story, a youngster who walks across the fields to an airstrip where he

watches the crop dusters come and go until they take him under their wings.

"Pretty soon they were hauling me to town and buying me candy," Ralph Stout said recently.

Stout, 57, had his pilot's license by the time he was 17, then qualified for a commercial license and started spraying. "I wanted to be a crop duster," he said. "I think it's fun. And we have made a good living at it."

He and his wife, Paula, own Stout Flying Service, the one-stop-shop for aviators at the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport, whether it be for fuel, a flying lesson, or coffee and the latest news.

Their hangar on the west side of the terminal was built in 1946 and is the oldest building on the 70-year-old airport, Ralph Stout said.

It was home to what is now Hillcrest Aircraft Co. for several years, and was the base for SuperKat when Stout went to work for Wayne Hughes and Gary Doggett in 1978. He bought the business in 1984, four years after he and Paula were married.

"We started fueling Horizon Airlines in 1984 and we've been open seven days a week since then."

Those were the days when Horizon flew F-27s and Metroliners. The Metros were slender tubes that carried 19 passengers.

"There used to be 12 to 15 planes a day through here for Horizon," Stout said. The number of flights are smaller now and the planes are bigger, with seats for 50 to 70 passengers.

"We have got awfully good

airline service for a small airport," he said. "We really do. And it's been really good for this area." He likes to drive through the parking lot and check license plates, a lot of them from outlying counties in Washington and Idaho, not just the valley.

Stout now employs 10 to 12 people, including one pilot in addition to himself and a mechanic who takes care of their planes.

The newest employee is a young woman from Nezperce who used to work on a farm. She's the latest of half a dozen or more young people, many of them women, who have worked their way through college fueling aircraft.

Both of Ralph and Paula's children also have worked for the company, and Ray, 25, still does at times. Neither is a pilot, although both have taken some lessons.

Ray's passion is basketball, and he's an assistant basketball coach at Walla Walla Community College where he played for two years, his father said. He and Erica Hancock were married in his parents' horse pasture near Genesee last month.

Their daughter, Kimberly, 30, worked in the office with Paula while she was home. She now lives in Bellevue and works in Seattle. She and her fiancé plan to be married in June next year at the Museum of Flight on Boeing Field.

"They both have careers outside of aviation but are never far from our aviation world," Stout said. "Either or both could end up back here. Who knows?"

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IVAN GUSTIN — JACK HOUSTON, MGR. — LEWISTON AIRPORT

*Courtesy of Ronald Gustin*  
The years following World War II saw the heyday of small planes and private pilots.



# Air Festival is Gift to the Community

The grin spreads across Ralph Stout's face as he describes the opening ceremony of the Lewis-Clark Air Festival Sept. 20 that will honor the region's military veterans.

Skydivers from Ritzville, Wash., will jump onto the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport with the American flag and young people from the Civil Air Patrol will be on the ground to catch it.

Other than that, said Stout, owner of Stout Flying Service, you have to be there to see it. "It's going to be cool, I tell you. It's going to be neat. If anyone misses the veterans' program, they are going to wish they hadn't."

The ceremony will start about 10:00 a.m. next Saturday and last about half an hour, Stout said. The gates will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. as part of the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the airport. But it's more than that, said Stout, who has been working on the details for months.

"This open house, air fair, it's something we need to do for the community, and this year it's kind of exciting," he said. Among the guests will be Bert Zimmerly Jr., son of the man who flew the first commercial passengers out of Lewiston.

The airport is part of the community, and airplanes aren't as accessible as they were when he was a kid, Stout said. "I want young people with their children to be able to come to this airport, walk through the gate and touch airplanes and it doesn't cost money to do that. I want the airport to be a friend to them."

He also wants to honor the military veterans of the past, present and future, Stout said. "That's one of the most important things to me." His father, Raymond C. Stout of Genesee, served in the U.S. Marines during the Korean War. Other than the cold, he doesn't talk about it much, Ralph Stout said, but it made an impression on his son.

Highlights of the festival will be two aircraft from the Heritage of Flight Museum at Everett, Wash.

A World War II vintage P-51B Mustang painted in the black and white bars that marked D-Day invasion aircraft will do a flyover at the festival and then be on display. The Mustangs flew escort for the bombers into Germany during the war. The B was the early model, with the P-51D coming later.

Stout said the P-51B, named The Impatient Virgin, is one of only two in world that he knows of still flying. He doesn't know the origin of the name.

The centerpiece of the festival is

a DC-3 designed specifically to fly the treacherous high-altitude route over the "Hump" in the late 1930s and 1940s. It carried supplies over the Himalayan mountains from India to China.

After the war, this airplane was among those used by the China National Aviation Corp. to carry passengers. In 1949 an engine was deliberately blown up to prevent it from falling into the hands of Communist China, and three years later it was returned to the United States through the efforts of



*Courtesy of Philip Makanna*  
One of two P-51Bs still flying will do two fly-bys, one for speed and one for photos, all at the Sept. 20 Air Festival.

the U.S. and British governments and Claire Chennault, former leader of the "Flying Tigers," according to museum research.

Visitors may walk through the DC-3. Donations will be accepted but there is no set charge. A limited number of rides on the DC-3 are being sold for \$325 to cover some of the cost of bringing the plane here from Everett. Those tickets are available at Stout Flying Service or by calling Stout at (208) 305-8408.

Pepsi of Lewiston is sponsoring the DC-3 and Peters & Keatts Equipment of Lewiston is sponsoring the P-51B to honor veterans of the area, Stout said.

There is no charge for getting a close-up look at the other aircraft and displays. Hillcrest Aircraft will have helicopters on display, and LifeFlight will have both a helicopter and an air ambulance available for viewing.

The Idaho National Guard 145th Battalion headquartered at Lewiston will bring its equipment. Marine and Army recruiters also will have displays.

The Idaho Agriculture Aviation Association will have crop dusters on display and a demonstration flight is planned during the day.



*Courtesy of Barry Kough/ Tribune*  
People and airplanes get up close and personal at a previous Air Festival.

for \$25 for about 15 minutes. Youngsters 12 and younger must be accompanied on the plane by an adult, he said.

Kiwi Air Helicopters of Clarkston also will offer rides for \$40.

Model gliders, the kind that have to be assembled, will be given to children as long as they last, and the Daughters of the American Revolution will be presenting flags to festival-goers.

The Experimental Aircraft Association will serve breakfast at its hangar from 7 a.m. until there is no more food or there are no more customers. Parking is available at the hangar, or people can take a tractor shuttle between the EAA hangar and the Stout hangar starting at 8 a.m. and running throughout the day.

The Nez Perce County Sheriff's Posse and Ron Lamb's Café America will provide lunch in the apron area.

Geoff Scott, a DJ with KOZE radio station and a pilot, will be the emcee for the day.



*Courtesy of Barry Kough/ Tribune*  
A replica of the aircraft that made the first powered flight over Idaho, the 1909 Herring-Curtiss Pusher Model D, recreates the flight on its 100th anniversary Oct. 13, 2010, with James Otey at the controls. The aircraft was the work of a cadre of airplane enthusiasts led by Dean Wilson of Clarkston and Otey of Lewiston at the Experimental Aircraft Association hangar at the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport. It is now on display at Fantasy of Flight at Polk City, Fla.



## After 44 Years, Retired T-Bird Still Welcomes People to the Airport



*Courtesy of Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport*

The refurbished T-33, or T-Bird, is rededicated May 5, 1994, 24 years after it was put on permanent display at the airport. William McCann Jr., then chairman of the airport's citizens commission and now president of the airport authority managing the airport, was the emcee.

It was a cool, crisp morning in March 1970 when Capt. Larry Leach of the Idaho Air National

Guard took the old Lockheed T-33 on its last flight from Gowen Field near Boise.

The jet powered trainer was headed for its final home, a pedestal near the entrance to the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport.

It perches there still, a shiny silver beacon to flight.

The T-Bird was the first jet-powered trainer used by the U.S. Air Force, one of almost 5,700 built between 1949 and 1959, according to Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum at Denver. It could fly 581 mph and reach heights of 47,500 feet.

This aircraft had been delivered to the Idaho Air National Guard early in 1953. The late Frank Sullivan was among the many people instrumental in getting the Air Force to retire the jet to Lewiston. D. D. (Buzz) Lyells, chairman of the old city-county airport advisory commission, was on the airport ramp to formally accept the aircraft from Leach.

According to a news story in

the April 1, 1970, Spokane Daily Chronicle and other recollections, a dismantling crew of four airmen from Gowen Field stripped the jet of virtually every removable part, including the engine, and trucked it all back to Boise.

A crane lifted the polished plane onto the pedestal and a dedication ceremony was conducted.

In the early 1990s in another part of the country, an accident occurred when someone climbed into an aircraft similarly displayed and triggered the still-armed ejection seat, former airport manager Robin L. Turner said. The Air National Guard returned to verify no such possibility existed here, confirming that little remained inside the aluminum skin.

The T-33 was refurbished in 1994 for the airport's 50th anniversary and rededicated. Leach, the last pilot, was in attendance, Turner said.

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## Gustin's Crew Keeps Planes in the Air

On the wall of Ronald I. Gustin's office at Gustin Aviation is a two-year-old plaque from the Federal Aviation Administration recognizing him for "50 years of dedicated service to aviation safety."

The Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award was presented to him "In recognition of your contribution to building and maintaining the safest aviation system in the world through practicing and promoting safe aircraft maintenance..."

That is Gustin's passion – the inner workings of airplanes, not flying them.

He grew up on the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport and at 75 isn't ready to leave it.

He was 6 years old when Hillcrest Aircraft built the first hangar there, the hangar that now houses Stout Flying Service.

His father, Ivan Gustin, learned to fly in 1937, two years before Ron was born, and flew for Zimmerly Air Transport out of the old Clarkston airport with brothers Fred and Bert Zimmerly, pioneers in Idaho aviation.

Ron Gustin learned to fly and soloed. "Then I didn't care about it, I guess." So he went to the Northrup Institute in Englewood, Calif., to get his mechanic's certificate and in 1969 built the hangar adjacent to O'Connor Road where his company still operates.

It has changed with the times, Gustin said. Recreational flying is mostly gone because of the cost and competing interests. He estimates the workload from general aviation, the term applied to private pilots as opposed to commercial, is about 20 percent of what it was 20 years ago.

Now you can buy an airplane for \$12,000 to \$15,000, but that's just a start, he said. "Twenty years ago a husband and wife and a couple kids could afford (an airplane)." Now, it costs about \$135 an hour to get the required 40 hours of instruction, aviation fuel is close to \$6 a gallon and insurance is on top of that.

Gustin's future is agriculture aviation. "We couldn't keep two men busy without it... We take care of 60 to 75 spray planes from the Dakotas to Arizona, all through the Northwest." Most of them come out of the Columbia Basin and some from Spokane and California. People are willing to travel

a long way for major repair work, such as spar replacement, which can take a couple hundred hours. It's that kind of work that keeps his shop busy during the winter months.

"There's no one else like us around here."

As airplanes began converting to turbine engines in the late 1980s, the business changed with the technology. Two of his mechanics have specialized training in turbines.

There also were twice as many spray planes 20 years ago, all of them requiring annual inspections and maintenance. But those planes were smaller and hauled maybe 200 gallons of liquid. Some now haul 600 to 800 gallons.

Gustin Aviation stocks a lot of spare parts and is a distributor for some suppliers. It has a boneyard for old parts, and the expertise to handle the modern technology, such as GPS systems that have played havoc with another part of the business, sale of the "automatic flag man."

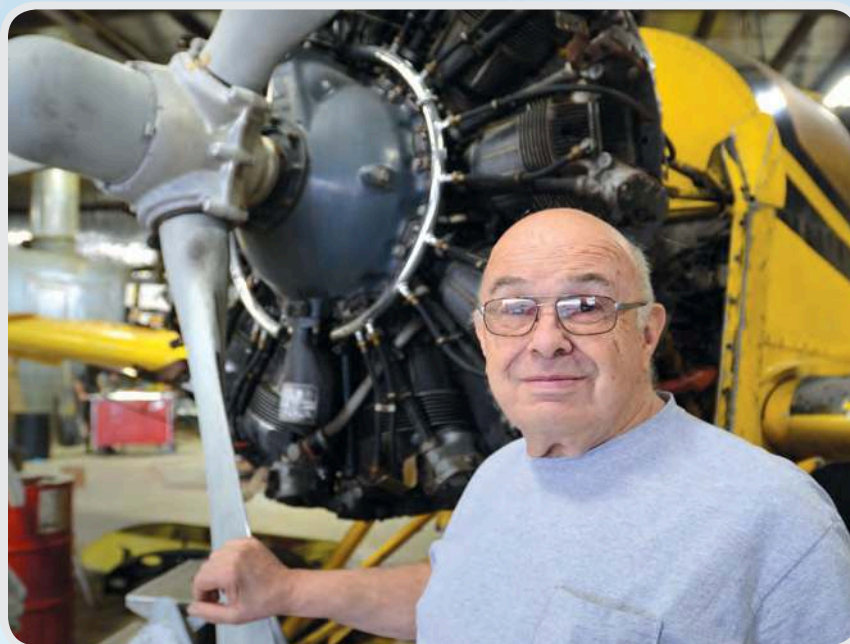
Flags are the paper strips that can be seen in the fields during a spraying operation. They used to be manufactured by a Walla Walla company that lost its lease and was considering closing. "We had been their biggest dealer so we ended up buying it," Gustin said.

Sales at one time were as high as 30,000 cases a year. They dropped to 1,500 cases this year, and the product's future is uncertain.

It's all part of a changing industry that includes manpower as well as equipment and technology, he said. He estimates fewer than 25 percent of agricultural pilots are younger than 40 and the majority are 55 to 65.

Although he's at an age where many people are enjoying retirement, Gustin said he's not ready for that. "I've backed away a lot, but it seems if anything is going on, it's 'hey, Dad,' but they take care of most things."

Ten to 12 people are employed at Gustin's, depending on the season. They include his son, Steve Gustin, and daughter, Ronna Leachman, and former son-in-law Russell Steele. His grandson, Kole Steele, is going to aircraft mechanics school in Spokane and plans to join the company after graduation.



*Tribune/ Barry Kough*  
Ronald Gustin's passion is what makes an airplane fly, not piloting it himself.

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## Hillcrest: Changing with the Times



*Courtesy of Helicopter Association International/David Witthaus*  
 Hillcrest Aircraft president Gale Wilson stands before the company's Lewiston headquarters and a portion of its fleet of Bell helicopters.

Hillcrest Aircraft Co. has its roots in the first business established on the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport.

It began as Melcher Flying Service, started in 1946 by Howard Melcher, Ivan Gustin, Tom Duffy and Jack Houston. After learning

that the cost of pilot training would be covered under the G.I. Bill, those four entrepreneurs started the company primarily to offer flight instruction to World War II veterans.

They changed the name soon after to Hillcrest.

The business grew rapidly.

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*Courtesy of Ronald Gustin*  
 Melcher Flying Service, soon renamed Hillcrest Aircraft, was formed to offer flight instruction to World War II veterans. These prices, advertised in 1946, no longer apply.



William Hughes, the Lewiston city engineer who was the driving force behind the airport's construction, wrote that by 1949 the company had provided flight instruction to more than 200 students and signed off on 65 private and commercial licenses.

In addition to flight instruction, the company by then was offering charter flights and ambulance service and had acquired two crop dusting planes, bringing its fleet to 10 aircraft. It also had built a large hangar, which now serves as the home of Stout Flying Service.

Gerald Wilson, an Orofino back-country pilot, bought out Melcher's and Houston's interests in 1959 and Duffy's the following year. Wilson and Ivan Gustin owned and operated the company until 1970, when Gustin retired and Gerald and his wife, Frances, became the sole owners.

Gerald and Frances's son, Gale Wilson, succeeded his father as company president. Gale recalled, in a Lewiston Tribune interview, that Hillcrest acquired its first helicopter in 1961 and that in the early 1960's the business owned as many as 85 aircraft, mainly airplanes. It also operated a Cessna dealership, which it later relinquished.

Gale, who had an early interest in flying, joined the firm in the late 1970's after a brief stint in banking. He had started piloting helicopters at a young age and soon discovered that rotary aircraft were his first love in flying. He expressed his attitude toward helicopters in a 2004 Tribune profile: "To me, flying a helicopter is an adventure. Flying an airplane is just a mode of transportation."

As the management transition from Gerald to Gale was taking shape, the father recognized that what had worked during his tenure as president wouldn't necessarily be the best fit for his son. Gale said his father told him, "We'll take the company any direction you want to go."

So, by 1980 the Hillcrest fleet had been converted solely to helicopters, and during that year the company also became a Bell Helicopter Service Center.

Providing utility helicopter services is a "hard way to make a living," according to Wilson. Helicopters are costly to purchase, insure and maintain; consequently, they're expensive to hire. That's an important reason why government contracting is a critical component of Hillcrest's business. Approximately 85 percent of the

company's revenue is derived from fire fighting.

In addition to fire fighting, the Hillcrest pilots and helicopters work in forest management, power-line construction and patrol, building construction and aerial photography.

Hillcrest competes as a family-owned business in an industry marked by consolidation. Wilson commands respect in his industry, evidenced by his recent election as 2014-15 board chairman of Helicopter Association International, the worldwide helicopter trade association.

His passion for helicopters and the helicopter business is infectious, and he enjoys more than just flying helicopters and owning them. He truly believes in helicopters: "Helicopters do good things," he said recently.



*Courtesy of Helicopter Association International/Tyler Tjomsland*

Gale Wilson pilots a Bell 206 L3 helicopter owned by Hillcrest Aircraft.

Hillcrest has about 35 employees and operates 12 helicopters. Wilson credits his family and his employees—his extended family—with making the company strong. Keith White, Wilson's stepson, has worked in the business for 10 years and serves as vice president and director of operations.



1950 - Frank "Sully" Sullivan (far left) with Lewiston's civic leaders on the tarmac at Lewiston Airport welcoming a dignitary to Lewiston.

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## Potlatch Forests was a Pioneer in Using Jets in Business

Few realize that the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport played a pioneering role in the advent of corporate jet aviation.

Potlatch Forests, Inc., was one of the first American companies to embrace the business jet as a tool for nationwide manufacturing and marketing.

On January 18, 1965, Potlatch, which based its aircraft in Lewiston, took delivery of the second aircraft sold by Lear Jet Corporation to a U.S. Company. The airplane, a Model 23, was the sixth to roll off the Lear production line in Wichita. It bore the serial number 23-006 and the FAA registration number N505PF. The PF stood for Potlatch Forests.

The Lear Jet, with its sleek, fighter-like profile and pressurized cabin, flew higher and almost twice as fast as most commercial airliners at the time.

Potlatch purchased the Model 23 to replace its modified Lockheed Loadstar, called a Lear Star, which,

although unpressurized, would outperform most airliners.

For some time, Potlatch remained on the forefront of business aviation. In 1968 the company took delivery of the 3rd Lear Model 25 produced. It offered a larger cabin than the Model 23. Then, in 1974, Potlatch purchased the first production Model 35, powered with fuel-efficient fanjet engines that gave it transcontinental capability.

Potlatch apparently took the view that Lewiston's limited airline service prevented managers from properly monitoring the company's expanding network of production sites and markets and from traveling efficiently between Lewiston and the company's new corporate headquarters in San Francisco. The Lewiston airport was fully



*Courtesy of Potlatch Forests, Inc.*

Potlatch Forests, Inc., an early corporate user of Lear jets, made this and other company aircraft available for emergency medical transport to Spokane, Seattle and California years before air ambulance service was available in the region.

capable of handling the early business jets, however, so the Lear Jets provided an ideal travel solution for Potlatch management at the time.

The company changed, however, and management moved closer to home. Potlatch discontinued operating its own aircraft in 1992.



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