

DOROTHY MEADOWS

Her son Bob's nomination came into the offices of *Flying Adventures* with the speed of an SR-71 Blackbird. On the wings of affection, borne aloft by admiration, Bob's recommendation that she, Dorothy Meadows, be named the winner of our "Nominate a Mom" contest and appear in our pages was a love letter so sweet what else could we do? We had to say, *Dorothy, congratulations! You're our aviator.*

"I have the honor of telling you about our mom, the pilot," began the letter from Bob Meadows, a master electrician with his own company in Hartland, Michigan. But it instantly became clear that Dorothy Meadows, also of Hartland, is oh-so-much more than "the pilot." The 70-something retired schoolteacher is a flyer so jazzed about her sport, her hobby – her passion – that her enthusiasm is catching. "This is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me," she recalls thinking at age 14 when she had her first small-airplane ride. "That was it," she says today, the instrument-rated owner of a Comanche 260B Bob calls "her baby." "I got bit so hard it's terrible." Terrible as in "incredible." Terrible as in "terrific." Or so Bob let us know. "Even when raising a husband :) and two young boys, Mom worked hard at flying and received her pilot's license in 1966," he wrote. "Getting her instrument rating in 1980 allowed her to fly more, and according to her, 'the more the better.'"

Bob just cracks Dorothy up. "I don't know why he thinks I'm such a great mom," she laughs. "He must have had a weak moment. We're a family like all families, except maybe we always did a lot together." Married for 52 years to high-school sweetheart Gene Meadows, a retired manufacturing jeweler, Dorothy is also mom to James "Jim" Meadows; she is grandma to Jim's two children Ashley and James. But really, this "family like all families" thing – a blessing to be sure – is a priori-

ty Dorothy is delighted to share with her other major joy: the air. "We have flown everywhere, coast to coast; sometimes we fly around just to fly around," says the aviator who holds a master's degree in elementary education from Eastern Michigan University and "thoroughly enjoyed" her 39 years of teaching, first music and then first and second grades. There's Florida to visit relatives; Portland, Phoenix, Georgia, Maine – Dorothy's logbook is full-getting fuller with journeys to places whose siren song forever calls her to soar up, up and away. Lucky husband Gene or Bob or Jim and his wife or grandkids (or any combination thereof) who get to tag along. "It is always an adventure," said Bob, who has been there for much of the fun ever since the early days, when his mom would land in some particularly unenlightened place and the FBO personnel would say, "Great landing!"...to his dad. Says Dorothy: "You don't find that today. Today as a women pilot you are respected!"

From blissful hours spent in such adventures as nailing a landing at Washington, D.C.'s Dulles field ("at night, right on the numbers...that was the biggest thrill!") to winging into "little airports where the people are so nice," the aviator finds she doesn't have all that much free time for her many *other* interests. A weekly game of bridge? "I love it," she says. The art of stained glass and the chandeliers, lamps and windows she crafts? "Lots of fun," she insists. Dorothy even sews her own clothes. "One thing I don't do is garden. Oh, I don't like gardening!" she laughs.

"Growing up we'd go flying and Mom would sing out loud, *Off we go, into the wild, blue yonder...* We're sure she did it when she was alone, too," wrote Bob. Well, says Dorothy, who makes no excuses for the sunny mood that always joins her in the cockpit, "I don't fly if I'm under a great deal



MEET THE WINNER OF THE NOMINATE A MOM CONTEST

of stress. I do not get in the plane until I get a problem worked out first. I want simply to enjoy the airplane - to buzz around the clouds and maybe shut off all radios and listen to the hum. No," she adds, "I don't do problems up there. Flying is my going to a spa. I just relax. I just enjoy it!"

Growing up "the kids had a ball," says Dorothy. Well, who wouldn't with a mom who, Bob wrote, "has all the manuals for her Comanche and is not afraid to get dirty working on it." Who wouldn't with a mom who also - from the day she graduated from 8th grade and sent away for information on becoming a flight attendant or joining the Air Force – has embodied the excitement of aviation. "Big dreams," says Dorothy. "I had big flying dreams." Today she is secretary of the International Comanche Society and, Bob was proud to write, "has been a supporter of the

sport for 40 years." What's more, when it comes to enticing her family into the Comanche, her radar is blinking like crazy with the lights of seductive destinations. Glacier National Park in the Pacific northwest. The northeast for the changing of the leaves. Maybe even Ogden, Utah (again) for the "total thrill" of the 360 degree turns it takes to circle in. The list is long-getting-longer of the flying adventures with which Dorothy plans to dazzle herself and her family. But scoring a nifty trip to, say, Lake Michigan for an icy swim ("the kids always loved that") is not the reason Bob wanted to flatter his mom with a profile in *Flying Adventures*.

Dorothy may be an aviator whose love of fun and flying lights up the lives of those to whom she's closest, but what's even better? "Flying is her passion," said Bob. "But she is ours!"

Bob Meadows with his parents Dorothy and Gene

