

PILOTS WHO DEMONSTRATE IT'S NEVER TOO LATE ...

General William Lyon Lifelong Legend

William Lyon was a 16-year-old boy when he handed over a single dollar bill for his first airplane ride. This year, at age 85, he sat in the cockpit of his own B-17 Flying Fortress and waited for President Bush to board Air Force One and clear the runway at Andrews Air Force Base. When it was his turn, Bill Lyon took off for a once-in-a-lifetime, low-level tour of Washington, D.C.

Lyon and his B-17 were soon joined by a P-51 Mustang and a P-40 Kittyhawk flying over the nation's capital in recognition of the 30,000 American airmen who gave their lives flying missions during World War II.

This remarkable flight over Washington, D.C., included a low-level pass over the Pentagon, a new perspective for the man who once commanded more than 53,000 troops from his office there. As General

Bill Lyon, he oversaw the U.S. Air Force Reserve units around the world. As a military pilot, he flew missions during World War II and the Korean War, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Retiring from the Air Force in 1978, Lyon joined his father and brother to build homes in California. With more than 100,000 houses to his success, he is—today—one of the largest home builders in America. Nevertheless, Bill Lyon never lost his love for aviation.

General Bill Lyon's B-17 lives in Orange County, California, alongside his B-25 bomber, A-26 bomber, two C-47s, a Gulfstream IV and a Robinson R44 helicopter. His collection of aircraft will be on display for all to see and enjoy in a new museum Lyon is opening at the end of this year adjacent to John Wayne Airport.



General Bill Lyon stands next to his B-17 bomber named 'Fuddy Duddy.'
Dr. Arthur Peterson stands in front of a replica of the Wright Flyer at the Wathen Academy.
Charmiane Freeman plans on spending her 85 birthday flying her Citabria.



Dr. Arthur Peterson The Politics of Flying

He was only 13 when he agreed to help some older boys build a Flying Flea, a small amateur-built airplane. After all, the complete construction plans had been published in an issue of Popular Mechanics, so there was no earthly reason to imagine anything could stop them. Except, maybe, a world war. The older boys working on the aircraft project joined the Army Air Corps, leaving young Art Peterson with an incomplete airplane and a lifelong lust for flying.

Charmiane Freeman Paying It Forward

The barnstormer who landed in the field near her home in Tennessee charged Charmiane's parents two bits to take their eight-year-old for her first airplane ride. Although it would be more than three decades later before she took her second flight, that open cockpit biplane ride was one of the most defining moments in their young daughter's life.

When Charmiane Freeman's duties as wife, mother and high school teacher were mostly behind her, she received her pilot's license at age 45, and at 50, she had earned a master's degree in aviation education. For the next 35-plus years, she put passion and lesson plans together by teaching people how to fly.

No one around her home town of Dyersburg, Tenn., really knows how many people she has trained to fly over the years. Everyone concedes that the number of people she has instructed is in the hundreds. Even decades after earning their pilot licenses, they still call to thank her for changing their lives. Some even say they can still hear her words as if she's still there beside them when they fly.

For example, a dentist called Charmiane recently told her about his flight with his daughter and two of her friends. They lost an engine, but the pilot executed a perfect emergency landing. The dentist phoned Charmiane immediately and told her he heard her voice talking him through the emergency checklist all the way to a safe touchdown.

After his undergrad work at Yale and post-grad studies in Chicago and Minnesota, Peterson became the youngest legislator in the nation when he was elected to serve the people of Wisconsin. Next, he became chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, charged with the responsibility for investigating and reporting on civil-rights issues. His new charge included crisscrossing the country in a Skyhawk!

From that moment forward, Peterson has continued to keep airplanes in his life. When he was the president of Thunderbird Graduate School for International Management, it was a Cessna 182 that was parked outside his office door, not a car. In Florida, Peterson built a single-pilot Mini Max. On a test flight, the engine quit over the Gulf of Mexico and Peterson had to ditch. It surprised no one that Peterson nonchalantly swam ashore, but many were surprised to see him dragging his airplane behind him!

Peterson moved to Montana and, once again, got himself elected to the legislature. He bought a Cessna to travel back and forth across the state, doing his constituents' bidding. In his spare time (!), he started construction on an Acro Duster.

Now 81 years young, Dr. Arthur Peterson is serving up aviation to a younger generation as president of the Thomas W. Wathen Academy at the historic Flabob Airport in Riverside, Calif. He's well past the midway point in building his Cavalier, a two-seat, low-wing nosedragger, but he concedes that it won't be ready in time for the Republican National Convention this September in St. Paul, Minn. So he'll fly himself up there in his Skylane!

Peterson's plans include a run for the California legislature. If he wins, he will become the first person in history to have served in the legislatures of three different states. And, you guessed it: He'll be campaigning from his airplane!

For anyone who thinks about putting off learning to fly, she encourages them to follow their hearts—just as she has for the last 40 years. Still an active pilot and flight instructor, Charmiane Freeman plans to be flying on her birthday this fall. She'll be 85 years old.

