

Lloyd C. Santmyer

1910 – 2010 Obituary

Lloyd C. Santmyer, pioneer aviator, passed away Saturday, April 24, 2010, at his home in Ligonier at the age of 100. Lloyd was born in Mt. Pleasant, Jan. 2, 1910, to Joseph and Viola Santmyer. His aviation career began at Charlie Carroll's Longview Flying Field in 1926, and over the following years his contributions to aviation were so numerous and important that he was inducted into the aviation pioneer's hall of fame in 1976. In addition to being a highly skilled flight instructor, he engaged in various experimental projects while a member of the Air Corps during World War II. He did the experimental flight-tests on the "Instrument Landing System," that is used at airports worldwide today. He subsequently instructed airline and military pilots on how to use the system. At the Fighter Command School in Florida during World War II, he selected and trained the first night fighter squadron in instrument flying. That squadron dispatched to Italy in 1942. Lloyd was then transferred to Wright-Patterson Field in Ohio to perfect glider and human ground to air pick-up techniques, the purpose of which was to rescue men, equipment and disabled aircraft from war zones not having suitable landing space. The aircraft they used to successfully pick up a human by airplane from the ground is in the Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Lloyd's background as an All American Aviation airmail pick-up pilot prior to World War II gave him the special expertise that Air Corps Chief of Staff "Hap" Arnold needed in a pilot for the Wright-Patterson pick-up project. Once these pick-up techniques and equipment were developed, Lloyd flew the C-47 that they utilized to pick up gliders, etc. to North Africa and there trained the pilots on glider operations and pick-up techniques prior to their invasion of Sicily. After North Africa, Lloyd returned to the U.S. at the request of Adm. "Bull" Halsey, who wanted Lloyd's advice on the use of the pick-up system for an island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. Lloyd, subsequently, gave Halsey a demonstration of the system at Mustin Field in Philadelphia. Lloyd ended his military career flying supplies for the Air Transport Command in the China-Burma-India Theater. While he was on duty there, the Allied Powers had their strategic Potsdam meeting and Lloyd was selected to fly Chiang Kai-shek and the China delegation back from that meeting.

After World War II, Lloyd returned to mail pick-up duty with All American Aviation. He became its training and civil aeronautics

board check pilot for Douglas DC-3s when the company became All American Airlines. In 1951, Lloyd became the executive pilot for Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corp. During his ALS employment, he flew then-Sen. John F. Kennedy on a number of his campaign trips in the ALS corporate plane before Kennedy became president. Lloyd retired from ALS in 1968, and spent his retirement years speaking to various aviation organizations, flying occasionally, and supplying information to aviation historians. He provided much of the historic information to the St. Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian Studies of Latrobe when (in 2001) it published "A Place in the Sky," a history of the local area aviation and its contribution to aviation's evolution from 1919 to 2001. Lloyd was preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, Lester, Kenneth, Glen and Elmer; and a sister, Maeola Upperman. He is survived by his son, Carl; and a number of nieces and nephews; as well as by his longtime friend, Elizabeth Hamilton. Honoring Lloyd's wishes, there will be no visitation or public services. Sharing and Caring Inc., P.O. Box 2616, Pittsburgh, PA 15230 and state that they are in memory of Lloyd C. Santmyer, World War II veteran.

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