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D. Berkeley Smith
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Hi Berkeley:

I enjoyed your recent article in the OX5 newsletter. I too am an Iowa boy with a career in aviation who lived 6 miles from your town of Hopkinton in Monticello. I am age 97. I went through high school in Monticello and then came to California to go through Stanford Univ. I have been in Calif. every since. 15 years in Los Angeles and the rest in the San Francisco area.

I had my first instruction at the Monticello airport in July 1933 in an OX5 Waco 9. My instructor was Ralph McCaffree. I did not solo there, but did solo Oct. 24, 1933 at the Palo Alto Airport located on the Stanford campus. I soloed in a Fleet model 2 with a 100 HP Kinner in it. My instructor was Tom Penfield. I got married in 1936, and my wife and I got a new Fairchild 24C8C as a wedding present from my father-in-law. We flew on our honeymoon in the Fairchild and flew it back to Monticello several times

I went on to an aviation career operating a fleet of helicopters. In the 1950s I was the largest operator of helicopters in the world with 40 helicopters.

Coming back to Monticello for summer vacations in years 1934 and 1935 I would rent Waco F's from Dan Hunter at the Cedar Rapids Airport to take friends and relatives for rides. I also went to the Cleveland Air Races in those years with my Stanford classmate, Walt Rosenfield who lived in Rock Island, IL. Walt also had a career in aviation.

You probably knew Ken Benesh a Monticello flier who was a lifelong friend of mine. Ken died 12/3/2010 3 month's short of age 100 at Upland, CA.

My pilot's license is #30107. I got my private license at Davenport on 7/10/1924 in a Lincoln PT with a Kinner engine. The Inspector was a man named Stevens.

My wife and I sold the Fairchild after a few years. About 30 years ago I found the Fairchild wrecked in a barn in San Jose, CA. I bought it and restored it in my wife's memory. She had passed away in 1953. After flying the restored airplane around to airshows and events for about ten years I donated it to the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos in 1998. That ended my flying career.

I have a hunch that a number of names I threw at you will bring some memories. I would like to hear from you at your convenience.

Best regards,

