

Plenty of wind beneath her wings

Written by News Desk

Thursday, 22 August 2013 15:56 - Last Updated Friday, 30 August 2013 17:44



Savannah Weaver of Millbrook (pictured) is an accomplished aviator. She was a pilot and flight instructor before she was old enough to vote. Now a certified airplane mechanic, Weaver plans to fly through college and become a mechanical engineer.

Photo: Special to The Indy

[By BRIAN HODGE News Editor](#)

Savannah Weaver of Millbrook has her head in the clouds, and that is just where she likes it. At 20 years old she is already a licensed pilot, aircraft mechanic and flight instructor. In addition she is a fulltime college student, works mornings cleaning and maintaining airplanes at the Wetumpka Municipal Airport and at night has a job at a local department store. To say she is a busy girl is an understatement.

Weaver says that flying offers her a feeling of freedom and excitement not matched by other activities.

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"For me, flying gives me a real feeling of freedom. You can do what you want and go pretty much wherever you want. It is great," Weaver said.

Like many young people Weaver was introduced to general aviation through the Young Eagle program, organized by the local Experimental Aircraft Association. The local chapter EAA #822 based at the Wetumpka Municipal Airport hosts an annual fly-in of which the Young Eagle program is the centerpiece. Weaver was 14 years old when she took her first flight and she was instantly hooked.

In 2009 she began studying to get her private pilots license, which she obtained on her birthday at age 17, the earliest legal age for a private pilots license. Lloyd Probst was Weaver's first flight instructor.

"Savannah first flew with me as part of the Young Eagle program. Based on my forty years as a flight instructor I was immediately impressed by her enthusiasm and depth of questions. Only four months after earning her private pilot certificate she earned an instrument rating, a demonstration of skill and determination usually earned 2-3 years later. In short order she had earned her commercial pilots license and advanced ground instructor certificate. While these are accomplishments in themselves, they are strong indications of exceptional maturity and development in someone so young," Probst said.

Dave Ramsey, a local pilot and now family friend of Weaver's said her enthusiasm for flight was striking.

"Savannah's dedication and focus on her goals together with a delightful personality made her many friends at the Wetumpka Airport. several of our older pilots took her under their wings and allowed her to use their aircraft. in at least one case an owner of a 1946 Ercoupe not only let her use his plane, he also bought the gas," Ramsey said.

Not content just to fly, Weaver recently completed her A&P (airframe and powerplant) certification. This certification is a major undertaking that requires a minimum 30 months work under the tutelage of a certified mechanic, 3 written tests, an oral test and practical test consisting of over 1,000 questions. Weaver was also the only certified pilot in her class.

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"This young lady has accomplished more in 5 years than any other young person I know. For the last 3 years she has been flying Young Eagles as a way of giving back as it was her experience with that program that ignited her interest and passion for aviation," Ramsey said.

Weaver was recently awarded a grant of \$4,000 from the Cessna 190/195 Foundation to further help fund her studies in aviation. She is also presently studying pre-engineering full time at Auburn Montgomery and plans to continue her studies at Auburn University in Auburn, AL for a mechanical engineering degree.

Since she first acquired her pilots license Weaver says she has flown several family and friends and not everyone loves the feeling of flight as she does.

"My dad does not like flying, so he was nervous, but he did not get sick. My first passenger to get sick was my cousin from New Orleans. I did not have a regular air sickness bag for her so she had to use my headset bag," Weaver said.

She says that she expected a challenge when she first decided to study aviation but says that a good challenge is a welcome thing.

"I don't want to say that learning to fly was harder than I expected. 'Harder' is not the word. It is a challenge. There is a lot to pay attention to and you have to know a lot more than you might think. But I love a good challenge and I love to learn new things. I think that is one of the reasons I enjoy it. When you work around airplanes and fly airplanes there is always something new to learn," Weaver said.

Savannah's parents and friends are obviously very proud of her. But her passion for learning new things is perhaps what they find most admirable. Her love of learning is admirable and infectious.