

Spotlight on a Neighbor — Two “United Flying Octogenarians”

by: Pat Weigand



Our Pueblo is a truly unique dot on the map. Our location, our landscape, our homes, and our neighbors combine to make this a stimulating place to live.

We recently became aware of a unique and interesting distinction regarding two of our residents. It seems that they have recently been inducted into a select international organization of veteran pilots!

**The honorees are
Hal Grieve and Aldine von Isser.**

Here is Aldine's account of the events that preceded this honor.

Hal Grieve and Aldine von Isser, who have been married for 8 years but have known each other for 63 years, have been pilots for many years and are now members of an international flying association, known as the UFOs, United Flying Octogenarians. They had hoped to live long enough to qualify for membership, and they indeed did.

Reporter's Notes:

The plane Aldine routinely flew over the dangerous Sea of Cortez was a turbo-charged 6-seat Cessna 210, equipped with oxygen.

The mission of the UFOs is to promote longevity and safety in aviation; to represent the interests of senior pilots worldwide; to inspire youth to fly; and to promote fellowship among senior pilots. The website (www.unitedflyingoctogenarians.org) chronicles the many activities of the Group.

Aldine has been asked to sit on the International Board; she is currently considering this invitation.

The most recent flight that Hal and Aldine piloted was last Spring in a 4-seat Cessna 172. They practiced 720 degree tight-banked circles !

In November, they attended a Fly-In at Ryan Airfield (RYN), a general aviation airport located approximately 10 miles southwest of Tucson at the intersection of West Valencia Rd. and Ajo Way. Most of the 14 UFOs attending flew into Ryan !



The criteria for membership are that one must have a pilot's license and be a pilot in command of an aircraft on or after one's 80th birthday. Hal and Aldine made it !!

Hal, who was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1931, started his flying career at the old Gilpin Airport in Tucson in 1946, when he was but 15 years old. He had to ride a bicycle to the airport for his lessons, as he was not old enough for a driver's license. He soloed at age 16. Hal, a poverty-stricken teenager, living on his own, earned the money to fly by working at a grocery store and at the old Catalina Theater as a parking attendant. Life intervened, and Hal didn't reach his goal of earning a pilot's license until 1992.



Hal's best friend and flying buddy in the 1940s was Tony von Isser, whom Aldine married at age 19 in 1953 in Tucson. It was he who introduced Aldine to the magic of flying and motivated her to take flying lessons at Tucson International Airport in the 1960s. She earned her private pilot's license in 1968 and went on to get her Commercial Pilot's License in 1972. This gave her the opportunity to take a job as a bush pilot in Baja, flying for a resort hotel on a remote peninsula called Punta Chivato, accessible only by air. During the 1970s, she ferried sick people to mainland Mexico for medical treatment, imported food from the mainland to Baja, and carried hotel guests from their homes in the USA to the hotel and back. Additionally, she flew contraband from Tucson to Baja. The contraband included items such as Birth control pills, diesel parts, and even dog food. The Mexican Customs Division at the airport in Hermosillo, where she had to check into the country, took a liking to this spunky young woman and turned a blind eye to her transgressions.

Hal and Aldine do little flying now, but their eyes light up when the subject of flying arises. They are proud to be UFOs.



The UFOs was started in 1982 by about 25 aviators. Its membership now numbers 1455. The oldest member is 105 years old ! There are members in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, France, England, and Switzerland.

Aldine prides herself on being the only woman UFO in Tucson---and in fact, in all of Arizona.