

A Few Stories to Pass Along

I am writing some stories that I know about my father, James (Joe) Dorris Greer, during the twenties and thirties primarily, and a few later on, in the forties and fifties. I want to pass on some events and tales of his amazing early aviation adventures, for Joe and Becky, our children, and our grand-kids, relatives, friends, and others who might enjoy reading them now, or recall them later.

Dad built his first airplane in 1922, at the age of 21, in Gilliam, Louisiana, near the Red River. It was a high-wing monoplane with spoke wheels, a wooden prop, and a two-cylinder motorcycle engine. There was no cover on the fuselage. (See photo and clipping on DVD)

He bought, at least three, Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny", WWI surplus, military trainers, in 1923. I found photos and clippings of two crack-ups and one ditching, after the engines quit: two during barn-storming; and one into Caddo Lake south of Vivian, Louisiana. (See two clippings on DVD, I have photos to find from Mary Edwards. She was a passenger when dad lost an engine after take-off. They narrowly missed a farmhouse and landed in a large chicken yard behind the farmhouse.)

Dad barn-stormed, crop dusted, and later formed an aerial circus. Dad would take passengers "for hire" and guarantee he would get them within three miles of their destination, or any southern town, or they wouldn't pay. There was always a pasture or other suitable landing site for an open cockpit bi-plane.

Joe, you met Earl Williamson, who was born in 1923, and his father Earl Williamson Sr., who was born in 1901, the same year as your grandfather. They were inseparable as they grew up.

Earl told stories about his father, Earl Sr., who wing-walked for your grandfather during the mid twenties. They were the same age, and the best of friends. Earl Sr. married Dad's sister, Mamie. One story was when Dad was flying a Jenny down the main street of Shreveport and Uncle Earl went out on the wing to toss out hats, advertising for Sears. The Jenny was underpowered, and even with full throttle and full opposite aileron, began banking toward the wing on which Uncle Earl was making his way toward the wing-tip with a box of hats. Dad yelled and motioned for Earl to come back toward the fuselage. Uncle Earl threw the whole box of hats, grabbed struts and flying wires and hurriedly made his way toward the cockpit. Dad got the wing up. They almost hit the tallest building in town, the Sears Building, which was three stories.

Uncle Earl, Dad's early companion, was his first wing-walker. There were many. Dad also had several parachute jumpers including a lady, Eris Daniels, in 1932, and Al Gardner and Irvin Davis. The most famous was Willie Jones, who stayed with Dad's aerial circus many years. There is a picture on the CD of Willie Jones titled "With 300 jumps to his credit". He went on jumping and amassed over 1000 jumps. Willie Jones was billed as the "The World's Only Colored Jumper."

Earl Jr. told another tale about your grandfather and Earl Sr., that I believe you heard when you were with me in 1978, and we passed through Vivian, LA. We were driving a '79 Turbo-diesel to CA, from the port in Houston. Uncle Earl Sr. was alive then and we heard this story the first time from him. It was about Joe Greer, your grandfather, with Earl Sr. as passenger, in 1923, putting the same or another

Jenny into Caddo Lake, which was near Vivian. They were circling and diving toward girls (clipping states "Roustabouts") in a boat on the lake. Uncle Earl said "Once, when we pulled up, the engine stalled (quit), and we went right in the lake." I said, "Joe, I can't swim! I can't swim, and your Dad looked at me disgustedly," and said, "Why don't you stand up." "We were in five feet of water."

Dad flew upper air observation for the National Weather Service in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in 1935. This is when he "Bailed-Out". He continued to fly for Delta based in New Orleans through 1940. This is in detail on the DVD files.

I wish that I could stand gazing across the old pasture airfields, of the twenties thru fifties, of grass and dirt, and watch the small bi-planes fly, most with tailskids, and wooden propellers, which had to be propped by hand to start the under-powered motors (engines). And, I wish that I could watch the ships (now airplanes and aircraft) being gassed by pouring white, unleaded gasoline through funnels lined with a shammy (sheepskin), to catch rust and dirt, into the upper-wing, center-section gas tanks. The skies were just as blue then, clothing just as bright, and birds, and flowers, and grass, and trees, just as colorful as today.

I remember riding with my Dad through the "Cotton Country", with the windows down, on hot summer days, through Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi. I remember the ever-present, lingering, smell of cotton dust along the cotton fields, the smell of sulfur, and later, the sweet smell of parathion. Tar from cracks in the paved highways, would melt and form bubbles, which would be slung by the tires to wheels, running boards, and fenders. Solvent and a rag was my job.

I was three years old, in 1938, when my Mother, Inez Greer, and I huddled in a baggage compartment, with our knees tucked under our chins, and flew from a dusting strip, back home to Hughes. Arkansas. We lived in New Orleans then, but were staying in a fishing lodge on Horseshoe Lake, near a Hughes Airport for a few weeks. Dad was dusting and flying for DAS then, until 1940, Lockheed 10 "Electras", domiciled at Lakefront Airport, in New Orleans. Dad had installed a large baggage compartment on a C-3B Stearman, with the door on the left side behind the cockpit. There was a handle inside that Mom held onto and pushed the door open about two to three inches against the slipstream while we were in flight. This let in more light. With her left hand holding me by my belt, she asked "Can you see the houses? They look small because we're up high." I remember seeing them. This is my first view from the air that I can remember. I was con-fused by the relative motion. I asked her, "Are those tiny houses and cars?"

I was a little older, perhaps four, when Mom and I had driven to watch Dad dust, again, it was near Horseshoe Lake, Hughes, Arkansas. Dad finished dusting and asked if I wanted to fly back with him in the duster. He strapped both of us in with the seatbelt. It was a five minute flight, but one I remember.

As early as 1938, my father would lift me into the cockpit of dusters. I couldn't see above the edge without a cushion, but I could play with the control stick and the throttle, "Wiggle the Twig and Wobble the Throttle", and imitate engine sounds.

In Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1939 and 1940, when I was at the exciting young age of four and five, it was my job to steer the handle on a two-wheeled dolly to guide the tail of early Travel Air dusters. The dolly had a circular pan between the wheels. Pilots and mechanics would call me to bring the dolly, and, with one person on each side would lift the tail over two feet. After I pushed the dolly under the "Tail-skid", they lowered the tail of the Travel Air, placing the skid on the dolly. They pushed the duster rearward into the hangar by the outer struts of the lower wings as they shouted "Watch the wing-tips", "Steer right", Steer left, or Straight ahead". Two handles, one on each side of the bottom of the fuselage, and a few inches forward of the leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer above, facilitated lifting the tail. It was a hefty lift for two men. Tail wheels were retrofitted onto the Travel Airs as time went by. Dad had Stearman dusters, Travel Airs, and his favorite, a Waco duster with seventeen coats of hand-rubbed dope on the fuselage.

Two holes were dug for the wheels in the ground outside the hangar for outside tie-down. They were about ten inches deep and substituted as wheel chocks to prevent wind gusts from moving the dusters or swinging the tails. The wings and tail were tied down also. Long stakes, sometimes auto axles, were driven into sod runways. Heavy ropes attached to the stakes were then double wrapped and knotted around the outer struts of the lower wings and a handle on the tail. Canvas tarpaulins were thrown over the engines and cockpits and secured with ropes. A great amount of engine throttle was required to pull out of the holes.

Dad formed his own dusting company, in between dusting out of Monroe, with a fleet of nine dusters: Travel Airs, Stearmans and a red Waco, in Greenwood, Mississippi. He continued the name "Greer Flying Service" from the mid twenties through 1961. The Waco was Dad's favorite duster. It had seventeen hand-rubbed coats of dope (lacquer) on the fuselage. Mr. Woolman encouraged Dad and applauded his efforts in Greenwood. I have one clipping naming the dusting operation "Delta Air Service, North Division, Greenwood." I am unaware of further information, talks, or financial discussions. This effort of several years work, and investment went up in smoke in FEB 1940, after a kerosene heater exploded. The hangar, nine dusters, equipment and tools were lost. Dad was on a Delta trip at the time. He arrived at Lakefront Airport in New Orleans, where we lived. He drove to the Methodist Hospital to see Mom. She had just given birth to Betty, my younger sister. This is when Dad got the call from Greenwood about the fire. (1940)

In 1941, on a P-38 test flight for Lockheed, the landing gear would not extend. There were numerous radio discussions with engineers, then, Dad got them down and locked with a "High-G" pull out at the bottom of a loop. On another occasion, he made a dead-stick landing in a P-38 at the Glendale Airport, a short distance from Lockheed Burbank. (The Glendale Airport was closed decades ago). On the ground, there were columns of smoke coming from both engine nacelles. The Curtiss Electric props had no mechanical stops during early flight testing. Both props had gone to flat pitch, the big Allison engines over-revved to 4,000 rpm. The props were flat, not feathered, and acted on the airframe like big air-brakes. Dad said he had to put the nose of the P-38 nearly straight down to maintain flying speed and control. Low pitch and high pitch mechanical stops were put on the props. The high pitch stops could be by-passed into prop feather position if necessary for minimum drag in the event of an engine failure. Dad later bought land in the mid forties and built an airport in Ellenton, Florida, near Bradenton, and southeast of Tampa and Saint Petersburg. He established a fixed base operation (FBO) where he built runways, a hangar, and up-to-date airframe and engine overhaul shops. Here, he rebuilt and

maintained aircraft and engines. Greer Flying Service continued as a dusting–spraying operation and a post WWII GI flight school. (1943-1961)

His shops were equipped with motor mount jigs, including a P&W R-985, 450 HP engine mount modification for the Stearman, dust hopper jigs, and jigs to extend the upper-wings four feet. He had factory engine overhaul manuals and tools. One day he couldn't lay his hands on a P&W 450, push-rod housing, gland-nut wrench. I watched him fabricate one by cutting off the end of a similar wrench, and by welding, machining and grinding notches where necessary. Frequently, he held an un-lit stub of a cigar between his teeth as he worked. The left upper pocket of his khaki shirt was normally stuffed with five or six Tampa Nuggets.

He did his own welding on the tubular truss fuselages, rebuilt the wooden ribs and other structure of the wings and empennage, with small nails and glue, and covered all of the airframe with linen or cotton fabric. Dad would lay the linen over a wing, cover the ribs with two inch wide linen tape, cut with pinking shears, and with the wing turned up, the leading edge on saw horses, he then "rib-stitched" with a long needle and cord. I enjoyed these times, it was fun to help, and push the long needle back thru the wing. Dad "doped out" the covering by spraying multiple coats of clear "dope" (lacquer based), and finishing with coats of silver, to prevent deterioration by the sun. Red, or another color, final coats were then added. The glasses Dad used for welding were badly pitted by the sparks.

Dad had a large, and heavy, LeBlonde lathe which he bought from government surplus for about \$1,500. (The original acquisition cost was over \$24,000). He had specialty tools and fabricating equipment, magneto test stands, and cylinder "run-out" gauges. He also had sand-blasting, brazing and welding equipment (including aluminum), and an extensive paint shop.

He had an expensive piece of equipment, a metalizing gun, with which he sprayed molten aluminum onto engine cylinders. When cooled, this provided an irregular and tough, long-lasting finish for the cylinders, and efficient cooling because of the rough surface and expanded area. The gun fed 1/8th or 3/16ths aluminum rod, or other metal rod, from a loose coil at a constant rate through a 9,000 rpm turbine drive. Oxy and acetylene were fed in from positions at the gun nozzle, which melted the rod. Compressed air then blew the molten metal onto the cylinders, much like a paint gun. The engine cylinders had to be absolutely free of grease or other impurities for the sprayed aluminum to adhere. Dad sandblasted them, and put them on a turntable, one at a time, so they could be rotated as he sprayed the aluminum coating. They were bright and beautiful. Assembled engines had the metalized cylinders, red or gray center sections and rear cases, chromed push-rod housings, and stainless ignition harnesses. (There is a picture of three built-up engines on one of the DVDs, which I took in Dad's shop in 1955. I still have the turntable that he used for metalizing.)

This reminds me of another story about Dad in 1960. I had been in the Navy for four years and was stationed in a squadron (HS-6), in San Diego. I had a red Bellanca, a four-seat, low-wing airplane. I came back from a six-month cruise, aboard the U.S.S. Kearsarge, and the Bellanca needed re-licensing. The fabric on the vertical stabilizer and under the horizontal stabilizer was marginal. At Gillespie Field, A&E Cliff Adams, used a Seaboth fabric tester. It left small round holes in the fabric. I was on leave and was

going to fly to Mississippi, where Ruby and Becky (three months old), would visit Ruby's parents, then I planned to fly to see Dad at the Ellenton airport.

I called Dad and told him about the fabric work and the new paint the Bellanca needed. Dad said to come down and we would do the work there. He said, "Bring your gas receipts as all the small airfields in Florida are being checked daily by the Border Patrol." Someone had been flying over Cuba in single-engine, and light twin-engine aircraft, and dropping leaflets harassing the Cuban government, and President Kennedy wanted it stopped. They were sure the flights originated in Florida because of small airplane fuel limitations.

I said I would bring my fuel receipts, and I had my ID card and leave papers. I obtained a one-time ferry permit from the FAA. I doped on, with blue lacquer, some round, three-inch, circular, pinked-edge patches on the vertical stab and underneath. Long story short-- The next morning, after I arrived in Florida, was sunny and beautiful. Dad and I pushed the red Bellanca in front of the open hangar doors, just as two Border Patrol Officers parked at the rear of the hangar. Dad saw them, and as they came in the hangar, within ear-shot, he yelled to me "Joe, you better hurry up and patch up those bullet holes before those boys get here today." I looked at Dad, saw the two officers coming in behind him, then, I looked at the Bellanca. It looked like the red Bellanca had been riddled across the tail. The blue patches stood out. The two officers swelled up in the chest and they gazed directly at me. I grinned, then introduced myself, and showed my ID, leave papers, and gas receipts. Dad just rolled his cigar, but I could see a grin. The officers studied my papers, and after a few minutes we had a good laugh. They asked about any other airplanes which may have landed at the Ellenton Airport that day. They hung around a good while. Dad said, later on, that while I was by the Bellanca, and he was working on a duster engine, one of the officers eased over to him and asked if the engine that Dad was working on, was a high- powered engine that had come out of the little red airplane.

Dad dusted at dawn, when there was little or no wind to drift the dust, sprayed during the day, and dusted again as the wind settled before sunset. Later, in Florida, he flew overnight "Frost-Flying" above citrus and other crops to prevent them from freezing when temperatures dropped. These were cold flights in an open cockpit Stearman bi-plane. He wore a leather flight suit and heavy gloves.

He started another summertime crop dusting and spraying operation at the airport he built in Louise, Mississippi. He continued these operations in the forties, fifties, and until the end of the dusting season in 1961. Dad suffered a heart attack at the Louise airport after eating a steak dinner in 1961. He had put out several loads of dust just after dawn, sprayed later in light wind, doped out (painted) fabric on a Stearman duster, touched up paint on a truck, and dusted again at dusk as the wind settled.

I missed a roast, when I was younger, in 1957. The Quiet Birdmen roasted Dad. I'm sure that I missed some great tales, but I have many of my own. I have to continue this effort as I remember more of them.

Dad was married four times. The first one was very short, and I know absolutely nothing about it, except it may have been an annulment. Dad's second wife was named Thelma. I didn't know her, but I have an older half sister, Mary Frances, who lives in Mississippi. She has a wonderful family, and is one of the sweetest ladies that I have ever known. My Mom, Inez, was a supporting wife and a loving

mother, and Dad's third wife. They met in 1934 when Dad was barnstorming in Hazlehurst, Mississippi. Dad flew from a pasture, where your Mom, Ruby, later grew up. It was her father's pasture. I have a caring and loving sister, Betty. Of course, you know Betty and Don who live in Idaho. Dad and mom divorced when I was ten years old. Betty was five.

Dad's last wife, Lynda, gave him three children. They are my younger half-siblings, Lynn, Brenda, and David. I love them very much. We live on opposite coasts, and we have only visited twice when I made trips to Florida. Lynn's family lives in Tennessee, and Brenda and David's families live in Florida. I lived with Dad and Mom until I was ten. Then, I lived with Mom Lynda, my dear step-mom, and Lynn, Brenda, and David at the Ellenton, Florida airport during three separate years, the fifth grade (1945), eighth grade (1948), and again during my second year of college (1954). The whole family would go out in a boat to find a Christmas tree. These were good times and I have fond memories.

I recall, in 1954, an air-show at the Saint Petersburg Airport. I was nineteen. Woody Edmonson was flying a clipped-wing Monocoupe, a model 110 Special. He put on an aerobatic routine barrel-rolling around Betty Skelton while she was doing aileron-rolls, flying her Pitts Special biplane, "Little Stinker." The next event was announced: a "Crop-Dusting" demonstration. Dad had dusted that morning and flew to St Pete. His Stearman duster was parked in a row of aircraft along a boundary fence, which paralleled the runway, in front of the spectators.

Dad opened the throttle on the duster and took off dusting, with a white cloud billowing from the spreader, from the parking area straight ahead across grass, the width of the runway, and more grass, headed for the parallel fence on the far side of the runway, and a tall line of trees. He held the Stearman on the ground past flying speed, then horsed the stick back, rolled the duster ninety degrees, held full power and a lot of top rudder to keep the nose aimed for the sky, and sliced vertically between two tall trees. He rolled ninety degrees back to flatten out to wings level and up into a steep climb. It was quite an impressive demonstration and brought gasps from the spectators. There was not much room between the trees. They would have sheared off the wings had he gone through wings level. I hope that I have described this so that you can picture it.

I knew that he had momentum on his side, but it was after I started flying that I was impressed even more. I realized that he was flying a trajectory with excess speed and gained some lift from the side of the Stearman fuselage and a vertical thrust component from the big Pratt Whitney 450 engine. The initial skyward momentum carried him through a gentle arc as the nose gradually fell.

He then did a couple of dusting passes with pull-ups into hammerhead stalls, then back down for the next swath along the runway. He followed that with some low-level stunt flying and an inverted pass down the runway. (One of the scanned documents is a photograph of the cover of a special Magazine section published for the Saint Petersburg Times Sunday edition, on Sunday, 6 June 1954, "Excuse His Dust.")

Another memory: When I was twelve, in 1947, Dad would return from dawn dusting, and if I was not up to hear him coming, on a couple of occasions, he bounced the Stearman tail-wheel on the top of the hangar. Of course, the throaty roar of the large Pratt and Whitney 450HP engine was sufficient. I

jumped up, started the 1946 Ford truck (I could hardly see over the steering wheel) and chased the cows off the runway so Dad could land. This was at Ellenton Airport.

I had great fishing memories also, bass fishing, floundering, gigging and jigging for snook. Once, Dad and I floated on truck inner tubes in a small lake that he had spotted from the air. We walked in through thick mangrove trees past an alligator den. We spotted the alligator. He was a big one. He seemed to keep his distance, but slowly followed us as we paddled around on the tubes. I caught a fish that broke my line above the float. The float would go under then pop up a few seconds later in a different position. I paddled to grab the float, but it went under, as I got close. The gator followed me as I paddled, staying fifteen to twenty feet away. I said, "Dad, this gator is following me around." Dad said, "Naw, he won't bother you." And, he didn't. I spotted him from the air later, he looked like a log on the bottom of the lake. Several months later, there was a photo in the local paper with a caption describing a large, thirteen foot alligator caught in the small lake. I think it was closer to twelve feet. But, the tail was a few inches longer than I was tall.

I greatly admired our Dad. He loved his family. I have never met a man in my life that could get more done in a day than your Grandfather. He kept his saw in the log and didn't worry about the chips. And, from what I have learned about Mr. Woolman, this industrious, "Accomplishment-driven work-ethic" is a trait they both shared. I was always eager to visit Dad and see what he had been working on, even in 1969, before he drowned in Bayou LaCombe, north of New Orleans.

Dad sold the airport in Louise, Mississippi (1962). After a long recovery from the heart attack, he started a surplus sales company north of Jackson, Mississippi (1963). Lightning struck the large building in 1965, and it burned to the ground. His logbooks, collectibles, photographs, letters, and memorabilia were lost. He had a spear and a blowgun mounted on the wall from the Amazon. I remember framed photographic prints of a P-38, top view, and a Ventura. Lockheed personnel, including test pilots and engineers, had signed the prints. Dad had signed, "J.D. Greer", on the right wing of the P-38. I remember the names Tony Levier, Milo Burcham, and Ralph Virden. I also read framed letters on the office walls. There was one, dated early 1931, from Mr. C.E. Woolman to Dad in Peru. The letter concerned taking care of the Huff-Daland dusters as times were tough. (This was Dad's third setback by fire. The first destroyed a fleet of nine dusters, hangar, and equipment in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1940. The second destroyed a number of planes, hangar, shops, and equipment at the Ellenton Airport in Florida, in 1949. He sold the Ellenton Airport in 1966.)

Dad retired on Bayou Lacombe in Louisiana, where he lived until he passed away in 1969. There is a lot of additional information regarding these first paragraphs. I will try to fill in the cracks, and, one day, put the events in chronological order. I am typing stories as I recall them.

Greer was hired in 1924, by Huff-Daland Dusters, Incorporated, the country's first commercial crop dusting company, as their first crop dusting pilot. The company was formed in Macon, Georgia. Dad was hired by Captain Harold R. Harris, in agreement with Mr. Collett Everman Woolman. Dad had met them both.

Captain Harris had been assigned as Officer in Charge of aircraft operations during a U.S. Government study to determine the economical feasibility and effectiveness of applying cotton dust by airplane.

Experiments centered around Macon and Marietta, Georgia in 1923, and moved to Tallulah, Louisiana in 1924. Joe Greer followed the government experiments and met Captain Harris. Greer met Mr. C. E. Woolman when barn-storming in Louisiana. Mr. Woolman was also closely watching the government experiments. When the aerial application of insecticide had been proven to be effective and economically sound, a group of bankers and businessmen in Monroe, Louisiana, purchased aircraft from the Keystone Aircraft Company in New York, at a cost of \$14,000 apiece. (Huff-Daland built dusters, as a specialized division under Keystone.)

The company headquarters was set up in Monroe, Louisiana. Five aircraft designed for dusting were ordered from the Keystone Aircraft Company, Huff-Daland Division, in New York. They were crated and shipped to Monroe. Dad had mechanics licenses and supervised the assembly of the dusters.

The businessmen in Monroe who formed the new enterprise, hired Captain Harris as Operations Officer, and hired Mr. Woolman, an entomologist from Louisiana State University, to run the new company as president, and to sell the concept of applying insecticide by airplane to combat the boll weevil in cotton.

The name Huff-Daland is not to be confused with the Huff-Daland Division of Keystone. The new dusting company retained the name and incorporated.

Cotton dusting by airplane caught on, in 1925, around Monroe, Louisiana. Huff-Daland Dusting operations spread later, in 1925 and 1926, to Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi. Huff-Daland Dusters, Inc. operated in the South controlling the cotton boll weevil, which punctured the bolls, and army-worm infestations. The army-worms quickly stripped cotton plants of their leaves.

Huff-Daland Dusters would later become Delta Air Service in NOV 1928, and then Delta Airlines in 1945.

Dad managed a fleet of five Huff-Daland Dusters, "Puffers", in the fertile Peruvian Canete Valley, during 1926-1927 and 1927-1928, and again, under a second contract negotiated by Mr. Woolman, in 1930-1931 and 1931-1932. This dusting was during our winter months. The Peru seasons doubled the months per year of dusting operations.

DAS entered passenger flying on 17 June 1929. Times were tough. The passenger schedule lost revenue and flights were stopped on 15 OCT 1930. J. D. (Joe) Greer and other pilots, were released from employment within DAS three days after the passenger flights were curtailed. This was an emotional day for Mr. Woolman. Then Dad and other released pilots were rehired two weeks later, as Mr. Woolman secured a second contract for dusting in PERU. This contract was for 1930-1931 and 1931-1932. This is a perfect example of Mr. Woolman's character, resourcefulness, resolve and determination! The two Peruvian dusting contracts were key financially, in the foundation of Delta Air Service, and Delta Airlines.

Dad established Greer Flying Service, and barn-stormed and dusted throughout the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and later in Alabama, Tennessee, and Florida. Dusting in our southern states was from mid-May into late August. He dusted for Huff-Daland Dusters and later dusted and flew Delta Air Service passenger flights, and during off time, dusted for himself.

Dad flew the first passenger flights for Delta Air Service, while still crop dusting in 1929 and 1930 in the South. Dad flew for Delta Air Service (1929-1943). He flew for Davis Air Lines (1934), for the U.S. Weather Bureau (1935-37), Chicago and Southern (1937), (which merged into Delta Air Lines), Pan American Air Ferries (1939), and later, National Air Lines (1941). Dad was a test pilot for Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank, California (1941-1942). I will follow-up with more details.

Mr. Woolman granted "Leaves-of-Absence" to DAS pilots when dusting seasons ended. They barnstormed and found other flying jobs to earn money and make it through to the next summer. Dad barnstormed, had an aerial circus, and flew many short-term weather and airline jobs. The United States involvement in WWII seemed imminent in 1939. Dad wanted to fly in the war effort.

We moved in 1939 to Miami, where Dad flew for Pan American Air Ferries, ferrying PBVs and B-25s to North Africa, and on to Egypt, and points east. We lived on Everglades Concourse in Miami. Dad requested a resignation from the War Department, from the Army Air Corps Reserve which was approved on 25 Nov 1941. Then, two weeks later Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Mr. Woolman granted Dad an extended leave, and he accepted a test pilot position with Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank. He tested P-38s, Hudsons, and Venturas in 1941 and 1942.

Dad joined the National Air Pilots Association (founded by The Air Mail Pilots of America) on 26 Feb 1930. He was a designated A and E (Airplane and Engine) Mechanic, later A and P (Airframe and Powerplant) and carried several CAA and FAA pilots licenses. He was a member of "The Caterpillar Club", having bailed out flying for the Weather Bureau when he lost radios at night with no visibility. He was a member of "The Quiet Birdmen" association. He was designated a Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps on 25 August 1930. Dad quit logging flight time at 35,000 hours. Several years ago, I calculated that he averaged 2.45 hours per day of flight time everyday of his life from 1922 until 1961.

The end of dusting season came, and dad flew inverted at thirty feet, along the short main street, past the mercantiles of Louise. A farmer asked later at the airport, "Did she get away from you, Joe?" "I have to kick the hopper at the end of dusting season to clean it out." Dad grinned, raised his cigar stub between his teeth, and rolled it.

James D. (Joe) Greer was one of the pioneers during the romantic period of aviation. He experienced and enjoyed the early beginnings, the development and evolution of aviation, the thrills and the immense freedom of flight.

Thanks for Reading!