

Louis G. "Andy" Anderson

February 22, 1914 - February 10, 2008

The man whom we have gathered to remember today was known by different names. To clarify, we will explain. The individual most of us know as "Andy" was born Gustav Louis Anderson, February 22, 1914, to Gustav Adolf and Emma Louise Anderson in Dow City, Iowa. When Andy started working, he switched his first and middle names, so was known to the government as Louis G. Anderson. Family and friends in Iowa always called him "Louie," but when he moved to Missouri his nickname became "Andy." Mail order catalogs most often addressed him as Lois or Louise. His many names matched his many interests!

When Andy was five years old, his family moved to a farm west of Dow City where he was kept very busy by his father. Whenever there was nothing else to do—all chores were done—Andy was told to paint the barn. Andy was always thankful that his father made him work.

His life wasn't all drudgery, however. He was always fascinated by flying contraptions. Unbenownst to his parents, he started building his first glider in his upstairs bedroom when he was around 12 years old. He helped his grandpa shovel coal on weekends to get the lumber for the project. Andy worked every spare moment he could on the glider. When the time came to assemble all the parts, he waited until his parents were gone for the day. Then he took the glass out of the window frame in his bedroom and handed the parts down to his brother and sisters below. He finished putting the glider together in the corn crib and had many days of sheer joy gliding from one of the hills on the farm. Everything was just fine until the boy his father and mother had adopted into the family kept pressuring Andy for permission to try the glider out for himself. He did...lost control...and broke up the glider. As soon as Andy's father learned what happened, he ordered the flying machine dismantled immediately. His mother used parts of it as a trellis for her morning glories between the summer kitchen and the house. So much for his first flying attempts.

Farm work demanded a lot. Times were hard, and Andy's father promised him that he would put Andy through Park Air College in St. Louis if Andy would quit school and help him on the farm. Andy did quit school, but things got worse fast; and Gus Anderson was not able to keep that promise to his son. The Depression hit hard—the Andersons lost their savings and the four farms they owned. Andy did mechanic work and odd jobs around town and tried to help his parents as much as he could. He began operating a gas station and eventually ran a garage and welding shop for 13 years.

In 1934 Andy was baptized into the RLDS Church. Two years later he married Phyllis Pearsall, a Church girl, and they made their home in Dow City. Three children were born to them: Donald Eugene, Barbara June, and Larry Vern.

Like so many others, Andy's parents felt they should move to another location to make a new start after the Depression. They chose to go to Washington state. Andy made a trailer out of a Model T Ford, and they used that to haul their possessions to their new home. Andy, Phyllis, and the children stayed in Iowa.

His dream of having a real aircraft was realized when he purchased his first plane, an American Eagle, around 1938. He kept this plane for approximately 40 years. It and another one

of his favorites, a Kinner Bird biplane went to a museum in San Diego when he sold them.

Andy was still working in his garage when World War II broke out. By then, he was building, welding, and maintaining 90% of the farm machinery in the county. Because of this work, he got a deferment from the draft board, although he had to report every week. Each time he was told to stay put and keep doing what he was doing.

At that time people were being hired in large numbers for work in aircraft factories. Andy went to Omaha to aircraft mechanic school and paid for a friend's schooling as well. Andy gave this same friend a car and all the money he could scrounge to go to California for a job interview there. The friend got the job and repaid the loan. Years ago, a man's word was his bond.

Gus Anderson wrote Andy that the government was building a lot of airports in the Northwest and suggested Andy come out and see what he could do. So Andy shut the doors of the garage and made the trip. Phyllis and the children came later on the train. Andy started working on trucks in Washington and bought one from a fellow who had ten. Soon he was in charge of running the trucks—hauling gravel and cement for airports. At one point they ran cement at 22° below zero. One morning he drove to the entrance of an airport and found the guard frozen to death. It was rough work, but it was a job.

During this time Andy was given an A-1 rating by the government, and he could buy anything he wanted for cars, trucks, and tractors. Because of this, he was able to buy the gas for the move back to Dow City in 1943. Things were still very bad economically. Andy continued welding and mechanic work. He actually built a tractor wheel for a fellow because materials were so scarce.

After the war, Andy bought an 80-acre farm outside Dow City. But there was one problem—he had no tractor, and machinery was scarce. When a tractor was put up for sale, everyone who was interested put their names in a hat. The person lucky enough to have his name drawn was the new owner. Andy knew he could never win, but put his name in anyway. It was drawn, and he bought the tractor for \$625. He built a garage in the barn where he worked on everyone else's tractors and cars. There was no rural electricity at that time, of course; but Andy built his own batteries—up to 32 volts—put them in the house, and the family had power. He worked on this farm for two years, then opened up a shop at Denison, Iowa. His mom and dad came back from Washington, and his dad helped Andy in the garage.

Andy bought an Aeronca Champ in 1947 and flew charter flights and gave instruction. He was the first operator of the Denison, Iowa, airport; and that is when he began his crop spraying operation, which lasted for 16 years. He sold the 80-acre farm and operated the Denison airport until 1949.

On a visit to Cabool, Missouri, to see a friend, Andy became acquainted with a real estate agent who tried very hard to convince him to move to southwest Missouri and start a spraying operation there. Andy returned home, got in his plane, and flew back down to the Cabool area. It rained for a week, but he finally was able to do some spraying. Then he happened to see a piece of property that impressed him. Within a few days, Andy made a down payment of \$2,500 for a new home for the Andersons—without telling any of his family! Needless to say, when he got back home and gave them the news, he was in trouble!

With an airplane on top of the truck, the family moved—bag and baggage to Missouri. Amid much moaning and bewailing of her daughter's fate, Andy's mother-in-law came to a startling discovery. She had relatives close by the Andersons' new home, and things started looking better. They looked so much better that Andy's father-in-law said he just might be

interested in moving, too. All's well that ends well.

The next few years were spent giving rides, making test strips, and building up a spraying business. In the summer of 1952 Andy went to the Carolinas to spray there and in surrounding states. He hired five other men to help him. It was in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia that he had his first serious plane crash. His Stearman caught a 7-strand power line which had been spliced. That splice was a blessing, since it caused the line to break rather than pull him down. He flew 18 miles with 1,000 feet of cable attached to the plane. One end wrapped up and around the seat where Andy was sitting. If it had been a little higher, he could have been decapitated. He was able to land and had to cut the cable in three parts just to get it off the runway.

He patched up the plane, flew back to Missouri, and continued flying. A second brush with death came at Freeberg, Missouri, when in the same plane, fully loaded with spray, he was caught in a wind shear. The Stearman spun into the ground, but Andy was able to walk away from the wreckage. (The FAA wondered where the dead pilot was.)

In 1954 Andy and his family moved to Mansfield, Missouri, where he put in a private airstrip just south of the house. He continued to build and restore airplanes and collect antique cars and motorcycles. In his shop at Mansfield in 109 days Andy built a replica of the Wright EX (also known as the "Vin Fizz"), which had been the first plane to cross the United States. Later, on the floor of the shop, he drew original plans for a small biplane he named "Scampy." It was completed, licensed, and flying in five weeks and three days. These were two projects he especially enjoyed.

To keep air traffic on his private strip to a minimum, Andy purchased a cornfield northwest of town, picked up rocks there with his kids, and put in a grass strip airport for others to use. Later, in order for the city to obtain a government grant for a longer paved runway, Andy deeded this property to the city of Mansfield.

In 1964, along with a partner, Andy opened an air museum in Wichita, Kansas. The museum lost money in the air capital of the world; and it was moved to Niagara Falls, Canada. The lost investment was regained in Canada, but the museum had only a 2-year lease. A southern gentleman convinced Andy and his partner that Santee, South Carolina, should be the next home for the planes in the museum. Unfortunately that gentleman's advice and character were not sound, and Andy spent the next 11 years with lawyers and the court system trying to make a just division of a business deal gone sour.

In 1965 Andy cleared land and built a 39-acre mobile home park called Andy's Acres just west of Mansfield, Missouri. He owned and operated this park for 16 years.

Andy turned down an offer to go to the world air show in Paris, France, with a replica he built of the 1903 Wright Flyer. He was also approached by a Hollywood movie studio to build airplanes for a Julie Andrews movie. But after meeting a number of times with the producers and seeing many changes in the initial agreement that was offered, Andy decided the Hollywood connection was not for him.

Sorrow punctuated Andy's life when, after 36 years of marriage, his wife, Phyllis, passed away. In this situation, like others in his life, Andy was given strength by the Lord to overcome the trial.

His life was to take a different turn, when in 1972 he married a young school teacher, Diane Jessen, who had graduated from college the year before. At 58 years of age—a time when most men are looking forward to retirement and slowing down the pace, Andy started a new life.

He continued his hobbies and purchased more land—this time across from the Mansfield

City Airport (his old cornfield). New shop buildings bursting with airplanes and automobiles still clamored for his attention. In 1980, after considerable thought, he bought property south of Sionita School near Bates City, Missouri. Again he built shops and put in the necessary airstrip. The following spring, the mobile home park at Mansfield was sold. That left only two properties to care for. Unfortunately they were 200 miles apart.

In the spring of 1993 Andy was inducted into the Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame. It was a fitting honor for one who had devoted a major portion of his life to making a unique contribution to general aviation through his building and restoring of approximately 100 airplanes, building and operating numerous airports, crop spraying and dusting, and giving encouragement and instruction to others who also had flying "in their blood."

The remaining property at Mansfield was finally sold in 2000; and Andy was glad to devote all his time to playing with his toys at Bates City. The past few years he especially looked forward to having new friends come over to fly their remote-control models. The planes were small, but that didn't matter to Andy. They imitated the antics he once had performed as a pilot.

He also enjoyed seeing the projects undertaken by his grandson Mark and his great-grandson Andy, who live at the other end of the airstrip. Watching them work in the shop was an elixir that bolstered his spirits and imagination. Although he slowed down physically, his mind was always going a mile a minute—busy planning this and that, along with reliving the past through the activities of the third and fourth generations of Anderson pilots. The last few months of his life were spent visiting friends, making a list of materials he wanted to buy, and discussing another addition that he wanted to build on one of his existing hangars.

That was Andy—a man who could never be idle—who never, *ever* planned to put up his tools for good—who never stopped dreaming. His tremendous need to create something worthwhile impelled him to accomplish more than most men ever dream—all the while knowing that what he did, he did only by the grace of God, who provided him with the temporal resources, innate ability, strength, and boundless determination which enabled him to live an extraordinary life.

After a short illness, Andy returned to the Lord on February 10, just 12 days shy of his 94th birthday. He was preceded in death by his first wife Phyllis; a grandson, Curtis Moody; 4 sisters: Betty Senter, Louella Miller, June Belcher, and Mary Lou Tornow; and a brother Donald, who died in infancy.

He is survived by his wife Diane, of Bates City;

three children: Donald Eugene Anderson and his wife Peggy of Mansfield, Missouri;
Barbara June Moody and her husband Bob of Mountain Grove,
Missouri; and Larry Vern Anderson and his wife Carolyn, of Sioux
Falls, South Dakota;

five grandchildren: Mary Pearson of Nixa, Missouri; Mark Anderson of Bates City,
Missouri; Nancy Hoagland of Springfield, Missouri; Diana Singleton of Mountain
Grove, Missouri; and Gus Anderson of Columbia, Missouri;

seven great-grandchildren, 3 step great-grandchildren;

four great-great-grandchildren; 4 step great-great-grandchildren;

many nieces and nephews,

and a host of friends.

We treasure the time that we had with him—seeing his accomplishments, listening to his experiences, watching his eyes sparkle when he shared his dreams—and we mourn his loss. At the same time, however, we are comforted in knowing that this man—recognized as a "master builder" by his peers—is now "home again" in the loving arms of the Master Carpenter.

“Gone from Sight”

I am standing in the grassy field. A plane near me taxis to the east and takes off into the cobalt western sky. The craft is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch it until at length it hangs—just a speck—on the horizon.

Then someone at my side says: “There. He is gone!”

“Gone? Only gone from my sight. That is all” I reply. “Its diminished size is in *me*, not in *it*. The craft is as large in wing and spar as it was when it left my side. And it is just as able to bear its living load to its destination.”

And just at the moment when someone at my side says: “There, he is gone!” there are other eyes watching him coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: “Here he comes! Home at last!”

