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Front Page

November 24, 2005

Hospitality gets airport named one of South's best

By KIP BURKE news editor

With a growing national reputation for putting out a warm welcome for visiting general aviation pilots, the Washington-Wilkes County Airport has been named as one of the South's best airports by *The Southern Aviator* magazine.

The magazine's editors asked their readers about their picks for best airports in the South and, in the October 2005 issue, revealed the results. The friendly reception that aviators find when they get to the airport was what led reader Kent Misegades to name the Washington airport – designated IYY for pilots – to the list of favorites.

"Pilots enjoy the hospitality they feel when they get here," said Chris Hughes, the airport's operator. "We're all friendly, and try to accommodate them with whatever they need. We have a courtesy car for them to use to go into town, and we recommend places to eat and things to see."

The airport's positive reviews in publications and web sites has led to increased awareness among pilots looking for good places to stop while making cross-country flights.

"They're really beginning to increase," Hughes said. "Just last Saturday, we had a dozen fuel sales. On a pretty weekend, we've had heavy traffic, and we've had a lot of calls from people wanting to stop through as they're traveling for the holidays."

Hughes says he gets quite a few inquiries from his ThisOld Plane.com web site, with pilots planning cross-country trips asking about fuel costs. "We try to stay competitive, because people have said if our gas prices are equal, they'd rather come here than say, Greene County, because it's

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Misegades found the WashingtonWilkes airport when thunderstorms had forced him to land there. Hughes had left for the day, but a call to 911 got the visiting pilot a ride to town from a Wilkes County deputy, a recommendation of where to stay and where to eat. "Furthermore, the sheriff drove him back to the airport the next morning. Now that's Southern hospitality."

At AirNav.com, a website that helps aviators navigate around the country, reader John Carpenter commented on his unplanned visit to Washington-Wilkes. "Bad weather made us land here in late July. What a pleasant surprise!" he wrote. "A local gentleman named Marion was at the airport ... and helped arranged for our transportation to town."

Carpenter goes on to write about having lunch at the Washington Jockey Club while waiting for the weather to clear. When it didn't, he said, "we spent the night across the street at the historic Fitzpatrick Hotel. It is newly renovated and fantastic.... This was without a doubt the nicest unplanned weather stop we ever had. GREAT local people."

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LET YOUR FACE SHINE,
THAT WE MAY BE SAVED.
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