

## Woman pilot Bobbie Whisler

BY LOIS BELL  
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER



COURTESY PHOTO | LOIS BELL

**Raised on a ranch, Bobbie Whisler learned that you just did whatever it took to get things done. She didn't think anything special about being a woman when she decided to test for her pilot's license that she thought would be a wonderful thing.**

SHERIDAN — She was the only woman in the pilots training program but Bobbie Whisler didn't give that a second thought. She was going to learn to fly.

"I thought it would be a wonderful thing to do," Whisler said. "Those were the days where you would land in a corn field based on a wind sock."

Whisler started working as a bookkeeper at the Clinch Flying Service in Nebraska. Clinch provided charter flights, rescue operations, crop spraying and delivery service for parts.

"Sometimes I would work in the shop," Whisler said. "Sometimes I would fuel the planes, do whatever they needed done."

Whisler's work ethic is grounded in her childhood on her family's ranch outside of Rozet, Wyoming. Like ranch kids, she did whatever needed to be done.

"One day my brother and I were coming back from working 80 acres," said Whisler, "when the Massie-Ferguson (tractor) I was driving started making a horrible sound."

Whisler jumped and

ran across a barrow pit and past a fence thinking the tractor was going to explode. But it didn't. She went back and made repairs to the tractor with bailing wire and drove the tractor back. She was thinking on her feet.

Whisler's first experience with airplanes was when she was a young girl. It was wintertime and she was severely ill.

"In those days you real-

ly, really had to be sick to call the doctor," said Whisler. The ranch had no telephone and her father walked 2 miles to a neighbor to call the doctor. The doctor was also a pilot and flew in.

"Dad put out tires in a field and set them on fire," Whisler said, to show the doctor where to land. Whisler needed hospital care but refused to ride in the plane.

"They covered me with blankets and straw to keep me warm in the back of a sleigh," Whisler said.

She was transported to Gillette where she stayed in the hospital recovering from rheumatic fever and a burst appendix for 30 days.

After high school and some different work venues, Whisler came to Clinch Flying Service.

"One day they needed another flagger to go out in the fields and hold a flag up," Whisler said. It was crop season and pilots were spraying the fields of corn and Milo.

"So I said OK, I'd do it. "I'm so short and the corn was about 10 feet tall. It was way over my head. You stood in the field and held your flag up for the pilots. You would hear them coming to spray then you were to run like hell four rows over," Whisler said. "But those stinkers would

veer to spray me. I came back with my eyes thick with spray stuff."

In time, Whisler decided to study for her pilot's license.

"I would fly at night after work," Whisler said of her training.

Her childhood fast thinking came in handy during her testing. Whisler was instructed to land on an airstrip following a commercial flight.

"But nobody told me how far back to stay," said Whisler. Her small plane was caught up in the airstream of the larger commercial flight in front of her plane.

"It bounced me around like a little dog," Whisler said. "I thought I can't land in this, so I just gunned it and flew around before landing. The operator on the radio didn't think I was going to make it." He was wrong.

As a pilot, Whisler continued to do whatever Clinch needed done including flying parts in a Piper Cub.

"They say you can land on a dime and take off on a nickel in a Piper Cub," said Whisler.

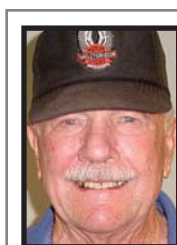
Whisler flew then moved on to other adventures, including starting a business. Now, at age 77, Whisler is retired at home.

"I had more guts than a slaughterhouse," said Whisler. "I've been blessed."

### CENTER STAGE

## A day late and a dollar short

Most everyone has felt like a day late and a dollar short from time to time. The first time that I felt that way was when I dirtied my diaper and Mom paddled me. Another time was when we boys broke into the community hall after the carnival and shot out several of the lightbulbs with BB guns. That time we got caught. Our punishment was to backfill the city ditches that the work project administration (WPA) was working on.



BOB HUFF

Later, I was pretty good at riding bucking horses. It was sure to happen and I found a couple of horses that dumped me. That is a lonesome feeling

to bite the dirt and attempt to regain your composure. Sooner or later you will find a horse that has your number.

It was self-inflicted, but I was a slow learner about U.S. Navy ways. I spent a couple of evenings marching on a grinder in full dress uniform. I was not the only one that had violated the U.S. Navy's policy. Our companions that had kept their mouths shut were sleeping and getting their rest for the next day's activities. We learned to keep our mouths shut, no matter what the circumstance.

For some reason the U.S. Marines and U.S. Navy could not get along. Whenever they frequented the same night clubs, there was usually trouble. When I was in the U.S. Navy we frequented a bar in San Francisco. While there one evening a bunch of Marines invaded the bar. Sure enough there was a fight. I escaped the experience a day late and a dollar short.

While serving aboard the U.S.S. Boxer I was sweet on a girl that lived close to where our ship was tied up. I was spending all of my time off over to her house. One time she wanted to see me, but I had duty. I was supposed to spend the night aboard ship. That could be fixed. I stuffed my bunk and it looked like I was sleeping there. Whenever I

did not have the duty, I had a liberty card that I could use anytime.

I left the ship anxious to see the girl. When I returned to the ship the next morning, it was not fun. The officer of the day had discovered what I had done and was awaiting my return. To make a long story short, I was not demoted from my third class petty officer rating. I had to do extra duty for the next month. I was restricted to the ship for a month. I felt like a day late and a dollar short after I served the punishment.

In high school I was very fortunate to have good teachers. Of course many of us students did not realize this fact at the time. We took our teacher for granted and never appreciated their dedication. The teachers tried to direct my interests in the right direction, but they were fighting a losing battle. I was convinced that all I needed was a high school education.

When I joined the U.S. Navy, that theory was blown out of the water. I soon realized that an education was important for earning money and the general station in life. Most of the officers made more pay, ate better and had better living conditions than enlisted men. The only difference between them and me was that they had gone to college for a couple of years. The light came on!

When I was in real estate for a living, I had many interesting experiences. A property that we had listed, a prospective buyer wanted to buy it. The only problem was he had a buyer for his property, but it had not closed. Not wanting to miss the sale I went to the bank and borrowed over \$100,000 at a high note of interest. I bought the listed property. To make a long story short, our prospective buyer took a loan, long time to sell his property. I ended up paying more interest to the bank than the commission amounted to. Before that deal was closed, I was just like the rat in a trap. I did not want any cheese, I just wanted out of the trap and deal. Another case of a day late and a dollar short!

**BOB HUFF** found one more story in him. Bob is a veteran and a retired mini-bus driver for the Sheridan Senior Center. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

### SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

• What's involved with planning your estate on your own? Learn the pitfalls in doing so at a free community presentation with Sheridan attorney, Tim Tarver, on Tuesday, Aug. 2 at 5:30 p.m. on the Sheridan Senior Center's dining room stage. The Senior Center is located at 211 Smith St. and this presentation is open to all ages. This presentation is offered under a community partnership with the Senior Center's "When I'm 64...or more" life planning lecture series. Light refreshments will be provided.

• Hike with the Senior Center and the Sheridan Community Land Trust. Easy hikes for the older hiker. The next hike is Monday Aug. 1. Call Jean Harm at 672-2240 for the next destination or just

come join us! Hikers gather at 9 a.m. in the Senior Center lobby and are typically finished by noon. There is no charge to participate. Good hiking shoes and socks are a must. Hats, water, sun block and bug spray are recommended. Hikers must provide their own transportation to the hike site.

• Senior Olympians! Join us for lunch at the Senior Center, 211 Smith St. Olympians will be treated to a complimentary ice cream bar courtesy of the Senior Center's Activities Program. Show us your Senior Olympic ID at the front desk Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and to the dining room desk on Saturday 10 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. for your ice cream treat.

**Sheridan Senior Center**  
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[www.sheridanseniorcenter.org](http://www.sheridanseniorcenter.org)

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Tue - Pork Chop Supreme		Minestrone
Wed - French Dip/au Jus		French Onion Soup
Thu - Fish Florentine		Cream of Cauliflower
Fri - Oven Fried Chicken		Vegetable Beef Soup
Sat - Sloppy Joe		

\*Entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Mon - Basic A.M. Moves	9:30 a.m.	Community Room
Tue - Pitfalls in Writing Your Own Will	5:30 p.m.	Dining Room
Thu - Horseshoes	9:00 a.m.	Kendrick Park
Fri - Bingo	12:00 p.m.	Dining Room
Sat - Texas Hold 'Em	1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Dining Room

Lunch Service Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.,  
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