

NORTH DAKOTA AVIATION HALL OF FAME

Charles Klessig

Inducted: 1997



Charles Klessig was born on a farm between Page and Galesburg, ND. He graduated from the North Dakota State School of Science aviation mechanics program in 1932 and stayed on as an assistant instructor until 1939. He acquired a commercial air transport pilot license in 1933. Charley barnstormed across Minnesota and North Dakota when school wasn't in session.

In 1941, Charley became the airport manager at Hector Field, Fargo, ND. He left to join the Canadian Air Force prior to United States involvement in WWII. He became a Captain in 1942 and served as a pilot until the beginning of 1946.

After the war, Charley returned to Fargo and established a full service flight school. He also had a farming operation from 1948 to 1952.

Charley became a "World Crop Duster" in the Federal AID Locust Control Program in 1952. He sprayed in this program for 11 years in Africa, Asia, Pakistan, and the Middle East. Charley spent many winters in Arizona and for a few years "aerial prospected" for the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine.

Charley was a well known figure in the aviation community and would show up at fly-in breakfasts in a leather helmet, goggles, and white silk scarf. He was also a gifted musician, playing the saxophone or one of the fiddles he had hand-crafted

Perhaps less well known than his aerial exploits was Charley's restoration of over a dozen airplanes. Seven of them are on display at the Aviation History Museum at Bonanzaville in West Fargo, ND, and a Curtis Wright Flyer hangs in the Hector Airport Terminal in Fargo, ND. His real pride and joy was a J1 Standard which he flew in many air shows and gave hundreds of free rides in. The J1 is currently displayed at the Experimental Aircraft Association Pioneer Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Charley authored the book "My Highway in the Sky", recounting his childhood near Galesburg, obtaining his pilot license, spraying for locusts overseas, his time in the Canadian Air Force and his numerous, historic airplane restorations.