

Continuing our focus on awards that can be considered special, we turn to our Airport Manager of the Year category. We always recognize solid contributions in this category. This year the TAC has determined that in addition to this manager's routine, daily extra-special Bert Loupe, please join the TAC Commissioners on the stage.

Yes, Bert Loupe has been the manager at Jacksboro for more than 50 years. He is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> to hold that position, and the first two were really only part time. The County asked Bert to take over, but he had to wait until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to get a contract for the job. He soloed an Aeronca Champ in 1962 and obtained his pilot's license shortly after he turned 16—he worked for 30 cents an hour after school to get money for his training. Fuel was 30 cents a gallon, instruction was \$8, and he reports getting through his solo cost about \$80. He learned from Guy Jones at the Powell Airport, was doing loops and spins at 10 hours. Shortly after completing his license Bert was flying a pusher/puller Cessna 336 for a law firm.

The airport manager job didn't really pay his way—he was only making \$150/month for a long time. It was his commercial pilot rating that saw him through. Bert flew anything and everything. He flew for See Ray boats for 22 years on Falcon jets—over 7500 hours on these aircraft alone. He's flown just about everything Beechcraft, Cessna, and Piper have ever made. And he still spends some right seat time in King Airs and does some instruction in Barons and Cessna 337s.

Jacksboro was a pretty new airport when he started there. Bert has grown it from 3500' to 4000', has added two sets of T-hangers, and most recently worked to bring a Med-Trans helicopter mission to the field, siting an owner financed hangar that can accommodate two aircraft and operations space. He expanded the ramp and relocated the fueling station to increase safety margins around the taxiways and runway, and is now improving the runway surfaces. He doesn't sit still.

Bert Loupe was the “wonder kid of aviation” in his county when he was younger. Now he works to get other future “wonder kids” interested. When he was a youth, kids hung over the fence just to watch airplanes. Now he is disappointed to say it is hard to get kids to just look up. The helicopter operations have piqued a lot of interest, so there may be some hope. You know, the \$80 dollars he spent soloing would be almost \$700 in current-year dollars—but it actually takes about four times that much to solo today. Part of the problem with getting new blood into the system. Bert is all for keeping it simple—“Real pilots fly taildraggers,” he says. He promotes “wind in your face, seat of your britches” flying—just to get started in the right directions. Hopefully, through leadership from people like Bert we can get some greater interest going among today's youth.

For all he does at Jacksboro—and for others that he has helped, like Rockwood—and for 50+ years of aviation service—the TAC is pleased to recognize Bert Loupe as the very special 2017 Airport Manager of the Year.