

# ANGEL FLIGHT



BY WILEY BLANSETT



*I've always been told*, "You can't have your cake and eat it too." I think I have found a way around that old saying. Back in early 2001 I started taking flying lessons. My older brother had been a pilot for several years, taking me places and showing me the wonder of aviation. After the kids got older I was able finally to start taking lessons myself, starting in a Cessna 152. My instructor told me it would be harder for me as I was starting out later in life. I laughed, but later I found out she was right. Did I mention my instructor was a lady? That's right. And I can't tell you how many times I got my hand slapped for not demonstrating the correct procedure. Training for my private pilot license took several months. Flying several times a week till finally I passed my check ride and obtained my private pilot license. Wow! Now I could fly by myself anywhere. Did I mention that my wife started taking instruction at the same time? She also obtained her private pilot license. We made many trips, for vacation, for fun and for lunch or dinner. During this time I also obtained my instrument rating and my multi-engine rating. Stopping at an airport for fuel one day, I came across a brochure for Angel Flight. Angel Flight South Central encourages pilots to volunteer their time and aircraft to help transport those in need of critical medical treatment which otherwise would be unavailable to them. The volunteer pilots provide this transportation at no cost to the patients or passengers.

I thought what a great way to enjoy flying and at the same time be able to help make a difference in the lives of others. After checking the Angel Flight web site for the qualifications to become a volunteer pilot, I eagerly signed up. After receiving approval, I signed up for my first mission. The day of the flight was a day filled with anticipation and fear. What have

I gotten myself into? My wife and I awaited the connecting flight bringing our passenger to the Searcy airport. Once the plane landed, we greeted our passenger and prepared for take off. Our leg of the flight would last about 2 hours. During the flight we were able to get to know our passenger. Our hearts melted as their story unfolded. The countless trips to the doctor for tests, chemo, checkups and more tests. All the while keeping a positive outlook on the future. We saw this time and time again with every passenger we flew. I am so appreciative of the many life lessons learned from the passengers we have flown. I have gained far more than I have ever given during my time with Angel Flight. So, to those Lyn and I have flown, I say thank you. Flying is addictive and so is helping others.

Can you have your cake and eat it too? The answer is yes. Now give me another big slice!

To find out how to volunteer, or if you or someone you know can benefit from the services Angel Flight South Central provides, go to [www.angelflightsc.org](http://www.angelflightsc.org). Do it today, you'll be glad you did. ✂



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