

GROUPS

McCall man given Master Pilot Award by FAA

Rich Bush honored for 50 years of flying

BY MAX SILVERSON

The Star-News

Rich Bush of McCall has been presented with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award in front of the very hangar at the McCall Airport that he first flew out of over 50 years ago.

The award is the highest accolade presented by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Bush is one of only two McCall residents to receive it. Michael Anderson of McCall was presented the award in 2018.

Bush, 68, first learned to fly in a 1948 single engine Cessna 170. In his half century of flying experience Bush has piloted about 135 different types of airplanes all over the globe from the Boeing 777 on long haul international flights to private charters and World War II fighter planes.

"It's an honor...I feel extremely grateful," Bush said. "I told my third-grade teacher I wanted to be an airplane driver. I ended up driving airplanes and I still am!"

Bush earned his pilot's license at age 17 with the McCall Flying Club. While in college he earned advanced

ratings and worked in various aviation positions in Southern California, Florida and McCall before becoming a pilot for corporate charter companies.

In 1990 he began a 27-year stint flying for United Airlines between San Francisco and international destinations like London, Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Beijing, Seoul and other hubs.

He retired in 2017 from United Airlines, completing 42 years of continuous full-time employment as a professional pilot.

Currently, Bush works as a flight instructor at McCall Mountain/Canyon Flying Seminars LLC, which is based in the same hangar where he began his flying career.

The Master Pilot Award recognized his excellent safety record throughout with no violations or accidents.

"I have never, as they say, bent an airplane," he said. "I've had equipment malfunctions and systems problems that required me to use my training."

Favorite Place

McCall is his favorite place to fly because of the variety and challenges of the terrain, number of airstrips and access to remote areas.

"My wife and I can get in our plane with our two dogs and it's 17 minutes over to Indian Creek and we're fishing on the Middle Fork of the Salmon and spend a couple hours and we're back here by 10 o'clock in the morning," Bush said.

"Seeing the rest of the world is nice but what we've got here is very special," he said.

Throughout his professional career, Bush took time to fly for fun and instruct on the side, always appreciating the range of airplanes he was able to pilot.

"I feel so blessed to have had such variety - one day, flying a new Boeing 777 from Osaka back to San Francisco and the next day, ferrying a 1929 Travel Air biplane up to Boise for somebody," Bush said.

Now in his 20th season as an instructor, Bush teaches lessons to advanced pilots looking to hone their skills in the difficult mountain terrain.

"Mountains are kind of like a river, and whenever there's wind blowing it's like with a river, when you put rocks in the middle you can get turbulence around the rock," he said. "The same thing happens as wind is moving around in the mountains."



Photo by Chelsea Tuttle/For The Star-News

Rich Bush of McCall was recently presented with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award for achieving 50 years as a pilot.



MARKET ANIMAL