

BILL WEEDMARK LIVED TO TELL OF TWO FLOAT PLANE CRASHES 7/18/95

The Adirondacks was unveiled in stages and one of them was the coming of air travel.

The float plane was the common mode of air travel and remains so today. The very nature of the terrain and weather calls for some unique and unorthodox flying skills.

There are many success stories and several of the old timers are still around in their 80s to prove it. I might add that I would not hesitate to fly with some of them today.

Bill Weedmark is living testimony to both the skill and luck necessary to survive two crashes.

Bill is not only around to recount both incidents, but still does not hesitate to fly.

The first event was in February 1949, when Bill answered a distress call with pilot Chuck Windhausen at Honnedaga Lake. Manager Jay Schafer had fallen and injured himself quite severely.

The plane was a Waco with skis and the landing was to be on the ice. All went well until the plane slowed to a stop, and then suddenly broke through the ice. Chuck instantly poured the coal to the Waco and made it back into the air. Another attempt was made with the same results.

They headed back to Thendara and checked with Honnedaga to get an evaluation on just what ice conditions were. They were told there were two layers of ice with ten inches of water between the layers.

Back they went and all went well until the plane slowed to a stop. Suddenly, it broke through the top layer and came up on her nose. There was nothing further to do that day, so they settled in for the night at Honnedaga.

The next day, ice conditions improved and Jerry Lamphear and Charley Bird came in with one plane and Bud Windhausen came in with another. Bill Weedmark said the wind was so strong it actually appeared to blow the planes backwards.

To make a long story short, everyone was ferried out with one exception. Jay Schafer's helper, a fella named West, allowed as how he would snowshoe out.

I was curious as to how the plane was brought out from Honnedaga, so I asked Bill. He said they removed the wings and taxied it out to North Lake. The prop was bent so that it vibrated something awful all the way out.

This is only half of the story about Bill; eight months later he had another such experience. It was the same plane and pilot, but the consequences were much more serious.

Stay tuned.