

## **FLOAT PLANES MAKE IT EASY FOR HUNTING THE BACKWOODS**

**11/23/99**

My first plane ride was in 1946 and it differed considerably from my last one. The first was in a C46 cargo plane compliments of the U. S.' Army. The last was a week ago in a Cessna 185 float plane as a guest of a hunting friend.

The first three flights in the C46 ended with the plane landing minus its 30 passengers. Last week's flight ended with a perfect landing on Seventh Lake with veteran bush pilot Jim Payne at the controls. It was the second flight with Jim in a week's time. Both were to hunting camps of mutual friends of ours.

The destinations were miles from any roads in the back country of New York's Adirondack Mountains. One was on private waters adjacent to one of New York's largest wilderness areas. The other was on one of New York's wild forest lakes open to float plane access.

Within minutes of take-off from the base in Inlet, we were at our destination. Five minutes later we were experiencing a total and truly unique wilderness experience as the sounds of the departing plane engine faded in the distance.

The signs and sounds of the wilderness are there to experience far from the sounds of urban life and its disturbing influences. We were left with a complete absence of any trace of how we arrived. The float plane is the only man-made contrivance that leaves no tracks or other signs of its presence.

There are many advantages to accessing remote areas by float plane. First is the time saved, which is better utilized in pursuing whatever it was you came to enjoy. In many cases, saving a full day on each end of the trip is not unusual. It's possible to include items to make your stay more comfortable, enjoyable and safer than you could otherwise.

All of the above are important to me; however, more important, my physical capabilities are not strained to the breaking point. I and others in similar or worse straits are able to participate in an activity we otherwise could not.

Hunting and fishing activities currently provide float plane operators with the bulk of their business. Why more hikers, bird watchers and nature lovers don't avail themselves of the service I do not fathom. The prospects of expanding their horizons are endless.

The long tentacles of the Adirondack Park Agency and its proponents have restricted float planes on thousands of acres of forest preserve. It is a ruling in my opinion that has a negative effect on the general public's enjoyment of the preserve. It adversely affects local economies and in no way adds significantly to enhanced appreciation of the preserve and its environs.

I soon learned to appreciate float plane operators after I became, a forest ranger, especially for fire detection, suppression, and search and rescue activities. They were also a big help in transporting materials for interior maintenance projects.

Jim Payne has been flying since 1956, and developing the skills and resources necessary to conduct a successful business. Sons Tom and Bob, able pilots in their own right, work with their father in the business. Another son, Will, carries on the tradition as pilot of a corporate jet.

Jim, as one might expect, has had many interesting experiences. He, like all of his fellow Adirondack bush pilots, has been involved in several rescue functions. A diabetic in shock that he flew out of Horn Lake in his Super Cub was one of his more memorable.

A lady from Hawaii he flew out of Gull Lake with a broken hip was one of the most amiable. She kept him entertained with jokes and wisecracks on the flight. Disappointed in not being able to view the scenery, he narrated for her much of what he saw as they flew along.

To make a long story short, I am looking forward to my next trip. The scenery is unmatched and the beauty of your destination makes you glad you came. Try it, you'll like it. The best part is you can continue to enjoy it as long as you can climb into the plane.

I have only known of one dissatisfied customer. Our daughter Lisa and husband Jim Williams were married in a plane piloted by Jim's friend Tom Payne over Bisby Lodge where Lisa was raised. Her niece, Cindy Allen, my granddaughter, age seven at the time, was her Maid of Honor.