

# Charles City's Kyle observes 50 years in aviation - the family business

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CHRIS ZOELLER, The Globe Gazette

Bill Kyle, head of Charles City Aeronautics, recently celebrated his 50th anniversary in aviation

CHARLES CITY | Bill Kyle has a booming voice and a smile as wide as an airport runway.

Kyle, head of Charles City Aeronautics, knew when he was a kid what he wanted to do when he grew up.

He wanted to be in aviation, just like his dad, Lyle Kyle, said Bill, who succeeded his father in running Charles City Aeronautics and who recently celebrated his 50th anniversary in aviation.

"My father was my mentor, especially from a mechanical standpoint, but he also taught me how to fly,"

said Kyle.

"I knew when I was in high school -- I guess I was about 16 -- that this is what I wanted to do."

A third generation of Kyles is also in the aviation business. Todd Kyle, Bill's son, is operations manager for North Iowa Air Service at Mason City Municipal Airport.

"We are the only three-generation aviation family in Iowa," said Bill Kyle. "I'm very proud of that. Todd got the bug early, just like I did. He grew up at the airport."

Kyle began his aviation career on June 1, 1966, while he was still in high school, as a line boy at the Charles City Airport, working for his father and his father's partner, Norbert Baltes.

A line boy does a little bit of everything at an airport, from pumping gas to washing planes to cleaning the restrooms.

"It was typical for high school kids to work as line boys," said Kyle. "Norbert Baltes asked my dad if he thought that was something I would want to do. My dad said, 'Yes, but you'll have to hire him.' That was the start of it. And here I am 50 years later. I've never done anything else."

He earned his private pilot license in 1968 while he was still in high school. He worked at the airport on weekends while going to college during the week, earning an associate degree in marketing from North Iowa Area Community College in 1970.

He furthered his education by focusing on his future career, earning an associate degree in aviation maintenance from Hawkeye Institute of Technology in Waterloo in 1972.

He then returned to Charles City and worked for his father as a mechanic at Charles City Aeronautics. He received his commercial pilot's license in 1973 and FAA Inspection Authorization in 1975. In 1982, Kyle took over as airport manager in Charles City.

Upon the death of his father in 1998, Kyle became president of Charles City Aeronautics. In January 2001, he and Todd began operating the air service in Mason City for which Todd is now operations manager.

Airplanes have to be inspected annually in order to be fly-worthy, said Todd. And people bring their planes from all over the country to have Bill Kyle inspect them, he said.

"He has an incredible work ethic. If someone brings him a plane and it takes him a little longer than he thinks it should have to get the job done, he'll only charge them for time it should have taken him," Todd said.

He said other family members apply the same admonition to both father and son: "You need to say `no' more often."