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## Story leads reporter to sign up for flight lessons



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BY LINDSAY WINSLOW BROWN

Tuesday, 21 July 2009 00:00

My editor sent me to cover the DeKalb County Airport's first open house Saturday afternoon, and I wound up getting information on flying lessons. My mom thinks I'm crazy, and my husband didn't seem surprised.

Working as a reporter, it's easy to get caught up in other people's interests, especially if they're outgoing, successful and a good storyteller. Journalists have access to individuals at their best moments in life. People open up, share their homes, their hobbies and their interests. Many times, as I'm heading back to my car after an interview, I feel like I made a new friend or the gumption to start a new hobby.

This was the case Saturday afternoon when I met four fantastic women who made soaring above the clouds sound accessible, affordable and more importantly getting a God's-eye view of the earth.

Dee Ditton dreamed of being a pilot when she was a little girl during World War II. Lewie Wiese started flying so she would get over car sickness. Rose (Peckhart) Ray didn't want any "young thing" co-piloting with her husband, so she went and got her wings. Linda Pulver became a pilot on a dare.

The women gave me no choice but to commit to taking at least one lesson. Lewie even went so far as to have me sit in the cockpit of her

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plane while Dee explained the functions of instruments.

It wasn't so much what the women said, but how they said it. They were convincing and made flying sound fun.

So, combine their enthusiasm with my fascination with Amelia Earhart, and you've got a concoction for a reporter to hit the open sky.

When I was 10 years old, I went with my family to visit Purdue University, my mom's alma mater. While on campus, we toured the dormitory where my mom lived, Earhart Hall. My dad took my picture beside a big painting of Earhart in her flight gear. We also got to see some of Earhart's belongings (such as her make-up and flight goggles), and I got to try on her leather flight jacket.

After that experience, I read nearly every Earhart book I could get my hands on. I never had dreams of being a pilot, but I did have fantasies of one day uncovering the reason for Earhart's mysterious disappearance. Perhaps that was just the reporter in me. Now that I'm a few years older, I'm thinking it would be great to live a little more adventurously.

I also feel like I need to experience as much as I can. Earlier this week, I had to call my oldest friend, Linley, after I found out she went skydiving. When she answered the phone, I commented that she still was alive. She laughed, said she survived and added that jumping from a perfectly well-running plane thousands of feet in the air was one of the best things she had ever done.

"You weren't scared?" I asked her.

Linley said she was nervous about jumping off the edge of a plane, but explained that she was strapped to an instructor. So, when he went, she went, too.

"It was great," Linley said.

Well, we've only got so many years on this planet, so why not make the most of it? Linley is. Those four women are. I guess it's time for me to step into the cockpit.

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