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Yellowstone Aviation FBO Owners Retire After 35 Years of Service at Yellowstone Airport



Pictured above Yellowstone Aviation staff

Photo Credit: Friends and family of Yellowstone Aviation

In September 1982, three men from Jackson, WY, a father/son, Pete and Brad Mead and their friend, RJ Moulton, were in search of a great adventure when they founded Yellowstone Aviation, the fixed-base operator (FBO) business at the Yellowstone Airport in West Yellowstone.

Yellowstone Aviation was a family-oriented business from the beginning. Brad, Pete, RJ, and eventually RJ's wife, Sandy, and their children, Adam, Ashley, Tory, and Tory's wife, Courtney, participated in everyday operations. Brad's youngest son, Tucker, did an internship. Several members of Sandy and RJ's individual families also helped conduct operations. Over the years, RJ's parents and Sandy's sisters, brothers and nieces helped, as did honorary family members Gay McBirnie and Bron Hansen.

RJ and Brad, along with their staff, were the "Welcome to Yellowstone National Park Greeters" for 35 years. They greeted large jet aircraft and thousands of small aircraft, hosted a Mooney from Europe, RVs from South America, heroes like Sulley (on the Hudson), an astronaut who did five tours to the International Space Station, two presidents, one vice-president, one Speaker of the House and General "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf.

In July of 1987 and 1988, Yellowstone Aviation hosted the first and second Tri-state Family Fly-Ins. The ramp and surrounding areas

were covered with 300 to 400 aircraft, large and small. On Sunday morning, July 17, 1988, the fly-in planes took off as military planes landed to fight the worst Yellowstone Park fires in history during which over a million acres burned. RJ and his staff worked around the clock to fuel firefighting aircraft tankers and infrared aircraft that flew during the night to measure intensity of the fire. Several nights RJ, his brother-in-law, Matt, and RJ's 2 1/2-year-old son, Adam, slept on the office floor in the terminal building waiting to fuel the aircraft.

Adam had been answering the phone and taking care of business since the age of ten. During the 2001 fire season he was needed to help fuel the tankers. His response was, "No pilot wants to see a 16-year-old coming to fuel his airplane." After a few fueling operations at the tanker base, the call on the radio was "Send the Kid." During that summer, his sister, Ashley (11) and his brother, Tory (9), were important to the operations. They operated the office; Ashley monitored the tanker traffic, and Tory took care of the small aircraft pilots while Sandy and Paul pumped over 10,000 gallons of fuel to the tankers. The 2001 fire season continued through late fall and was interrupted by the 09/11 World Trade Center attacks.

August 15, 2009, marked one of their most memorable adventures while at Yellowstone when Air Force One spent the day at the Yellowstone Airport. Ashley provided airport advisories to the Presidential Pilot on arrival to and departure from the field. Adam was the fuel truck operator, and Tory provided the photo documentation from the ramp. By the end of the day, Yellowstone Aviation staff had fueled Air Force One, Marine One, CH-53 helicopters, C-17s and C-5A cargo ships that supported the Presidential detail.

After 35 years of dedication, the two families sold the FBO operations at the Yellowstone Airport in early 2018. Yellowstone Aviation was more than a business, it was a way of life that included meeting travelers from across the world. Sandy Moulton, who managed the business for the last 25 years, said "What I loved most about being part of the Yellowstone Aviation team is that the world came to visit us!"

The FBO services are now provided by Choice Aviation out of Cody, WY. The Mead and Moulton families wish Choice Aviation fair winds and happy landings.