

By Jim Tracy

I had long looked forward to my rookie PFC flight, but weather delays and logistics seemed to prevent me from getting even one done. In the Pacific Northwest, weather can do that to you. I don't think I had any indication of what God had in store for me? My sister in laws mom, who lives near Des Moines, IA was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I didn't know much, only that this is not the kind of disease you want to get. It is terminal and she wasn't given many months to live.

More than a week after hearing about her condition, I was told how sad it was that I was so far away, because she relayed to her hospice worker that her "last wish" was to fly in a small plane. I had a trip planned to the Midwest and thought it might work out, so we started planning on giving a ride to Wanda. As her condition began to deteriorate, the flight started to look more problematic, but when the day came around she was ready and willing. I flew from my original stop in South Dakota to a small airport near Des Moines. Even during the taxi to the terminal, I could spot my passengers and my excitement began to intensify.

After meeting them for the first time, we loaded up our special passenger from a wheel chair into the Saratoga. I would be joined by her son-in-law and she wished to sight see in the area of her youth. We did an aerial survey of the local towns paying particular attention to the local downtown areas, cemeteries and schools. Even standard rate turns were pretty aggressive for her so the flight controls had to be handled with finesse. She didn't talk much during the flight, other than to point out various places and ask where we were. I didn't really know if she was enjoying herself that much. I turned final after a very long extended downwind and wide left base to a perfect touchdown. It felt so wonderful to grease a landing with such an important passenger!

We taxied back to the terminal and unloaded. Her daughter was so thankful, but some inside information I previously received was nagging me. After a few minutes, I dropped on one knee down in front of the wheel chair and asked Wanda if it was true that she was dying. She replied yes. I was then able to query her on where she was going when she died and why. She apparently knew who Jesus was from her youth, and let me know that she was going to be with him. During the short discussion that followed, I could hear a family member crying behind me. I came later to know that another one of her daughters, who is a believer, was greatly touched by hearing our conversation.

My simple flight earned me the right to discuss my Lord with Wanda. I really doubted how effective I had been until the daughter who had been behind me contacted me to say thank you and let me know that my witness to her mother had given her boldness to fully explore the Gospel with her Mother. What a privilege!