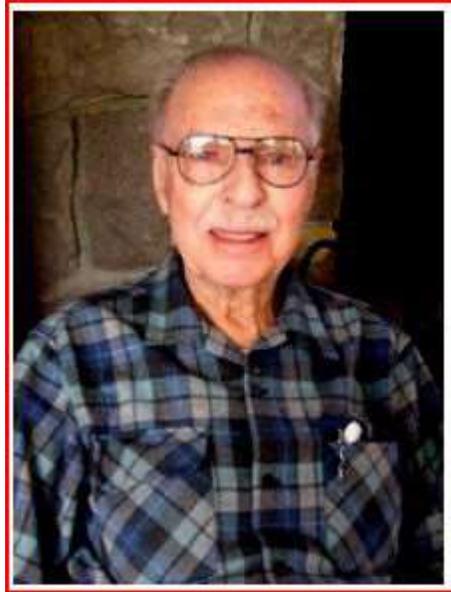


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Meet Bob Banta
A High Desert Villager



Bob Banta, our featured HDV member of the month can be described only one way; he is an ADVENTURER! Born in Kansas, he began his interesting life early. After working a full time night shift as a diesel mechanic through his high school days (during which he admits to sleeping at his desk), he joined the Merchant Marines after graduation in 1943. First, however, he traveled over 8000 miles for three months throughout the western states on his motorcycle before reporting for duty in San Francisco on his 18th birthday. He spent two years sailing as a crew member and the final year as an officer and a licensed engineer. This was during WWII.

Eventually Bob ended up in Silverton, CO where he lived for 10 years venturing into many different fields. It was during this time he bought his first plane. He also built and owned the first airport there. That experience made him realize he had “the flying bug” and wanted to make it a career. “The ink was still wet on my commercial license, when I ‘bought’ my first flying job by accepting worthless stock in a mining company for my plane.” He flew mining workers to various sites for a couple of years. Eventually he landed a job flying for Frontier Airlines and remained with them for 25 plus years.

After retiring at the mandatory age of 60, he flew freighters for 8 more years because there was no age limit and he just loved flying. He also set up a pilot training program for American West Airlines out of Phoenix.

Among his many exploits, Bob relates the time in 1965 he was commissioned to deliver a DC 3, ordered by President Marcos, to the Philippines. Because he could not cross the Pacific Ocean with the plane’s small fuel tanks, he, together with his pilot wife, flew across the Atlantic and through Europe and Asia. The trip was not without its hazards since the plane had been stored for five years. The engine stalled twice before leaving Halifax. After leaving Calcutta toward Bangkok, he was told not to land because there was a communist uprising so they diverted him to Saigon (talk about going from the frying pan into the fire)! On his final leg and over shark-infested water, the engine stalled once again and the plane was dropping over 100 feet a minute when at 1500 feet, he was finally able to get it restarted. When they finally arrived, they were greeted with a crowd and a band. He, however, had to avoid all the festivities and photos, because according to FAA regulations, he should not have taken the job while an active airlines pilot.

With free flights available to Bob and his wife, they undertook many fascinating trips to far flung places too numerous to relate. One of his favorite adventures was taking a 5 day trip in a wood burning stern wheeler boat down a jungle river in Columbia. They had to first travel 14 hours by train through rugged terrain known as bandits’

territory to get to the boat. They did this without knowing for sure the trip really existed until they reached Bogotá.

After his wife died, he developed cancer and while recovering from surgery, Bob met his current wife, Alice who was one of the nurses caring for him. They have been married for 17 years. They moved from Denver to Bend in 2000. He sold his last plane four years ago when they moved from their house with a private airstrip to their present home.

Things with engines continue to fascinate Bob. He still owns and sometimes rides a motorcycle. They also own a beautifully restored 1931 Model A Ford which they often ride in local parades along with other members of the High Desert A's Club. He is a member of The Quiet Bird Man, a professional pilot's fraternity of which Charles Lindbergh was an early member. Both Bob and Alice are active member of the Masonic Shrine which raises money to support hospitals for crippled children.

Bob's philosophy in life: "Don't waste time regretting your past mistakes. Look forward to tomorrow and do what good you can do."

- *Alice Johnson* @ <http://www.highdesertvillage.com/vl1209.pdf>