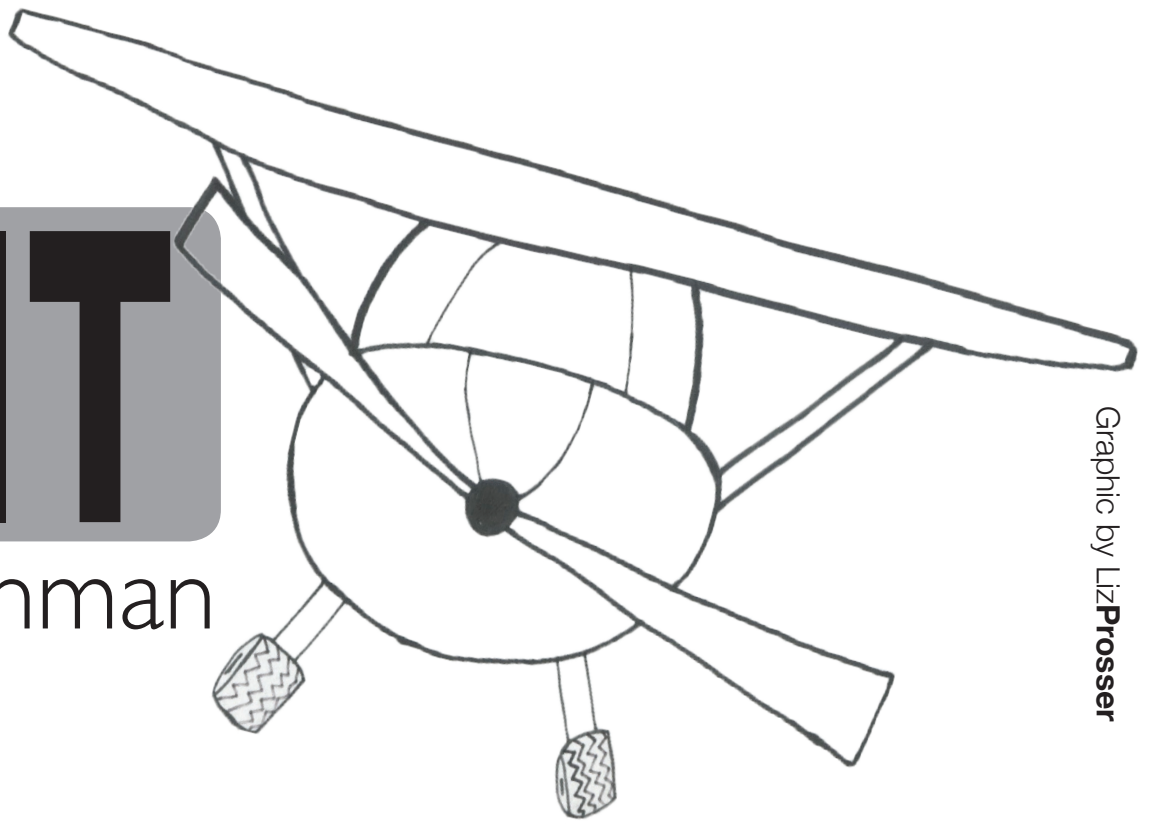


SKY'S THE LIMIT

for high-flying freshman



Graphic by Liz Prosser

Kyra Lindholm

Most girls know that a trip to Okoboji typically involves squeezing into a family minivan packed tightly with backpacks, duffel bags, boxes of food and a little brother who insists he's not getting enough of the backseat. For freshman Mary Rose Steier, a trip to Okoboji in the summer means climbing aboard her family's airplane. This takes a three-hour car ride and shrinks it down to a short, comfortable flight. As exciting as this would seem to someone else, Steier has never known any differently.

"I've been around airplanes my whole life," Steier said. When she was younger, Steier remembers being taken to various airports for flight breakfasts. Steier and her family would eat breakfast served at the airports before walking around and taking a look at different airplanes. Flying airplanes seems to be a prominent character trait in the Steier family. "My uncle owns two planes, and my grandpa owns one, too," Steier said. "But my great-uncle owns seven planes."

Owning and flying airplanes is an activity that has been passed down through the generations. Steier credits her great-uncle for having an interest that has become a great family pastime. "They all have regular jobs, so this is more like a fun hobby for them," Steier said.

The Steier's six-seater airplane is named "Honey." As much as the Steiers enjoy their plane, they didn't select the name. It came as a packaged deal with the purchase of the "Bonanza" model plane. "When my dad went to buy it, the previous owner had called it Honey. We all decided to just keep it," Steier said.

Honey is kept at the Millard Airport. The Steiers have her looked over for an annual inspection to make sure everything is running smoothly. "We have to have it checked so that we can keep flying," Steier said. The Steiers clean and maintain Honey on their own, with the exception of the check-up every year.

Steier's great-uncle, however, lives in Iowa and has a runway in his backyard. In addition, he restored a "Bamboo Bomber" airplane as a personal project. "It's pretty cool whenever we go out there because it's his farm

and then behind it there's this runway," Steier said. "He can just take off and land there."

The typical destination for the Steier family, however, is not the exotic cornfields of Iowa, but rather its lakes. "We usually fly down to Okoboji on the weekends in the summer," Steier said. There's no need to hire a pilot because Steier's dad has his pilot's license and flies the family and friends over to the popular summer vacation spot. It definitely gives a new meaning to the term "road trip." "My friends all ask me for rides," Steier laughed. "It's a lot of fun to take my friends there with me."

Last summer, Steier's dad decided to start a family project. The goal was to go to all of the airports in Nebraska. "We went to at least four or five airports a day each Sunday," Steier said. "There are 70 some airports in Nebraska, so it took a while." The Steiers accomplished their mission and soon began a new project. "We started on Iowa, but

we haven't finished up yet," Steier said. The Steiers have also visited Kansas, Wyoming and South Dakota in addition to flying all over Nebraska.

Since Steier has been in and around planes for most of her life, people might suspect that she will eventually get tired of it. Steier, however, assures that isn't the case. "During the school year we can't fly as much because we're busier, but we still go every other week. In the summer though, we fly around three times a week," Steier said. Steier definitely thinks that she will still be interested in planes for a while longer. "My

dad's worried that he's burned us out with all the flying. When I was little, we flew every weekend. I still really like it though," Steier said.

Of all the potentially quirky hobbies a family could possess, flying airplanes is certainly one to be envied. While being a pilot isn't a career calling for Steier, she can't deny her desire to fly. "Well, my dad's a pilot, and sometimes he'll let me handle the controls when we're in the air. I know I would have to save up my own money to learn how to fly, but I definitely think it would be worth it," Steier said.



Photos courtesy of Mary Rose Steier.



Sky high. Freshman Mary Rose Steier, along with family, fly high in their family plane. Joseph Steier, Mary's father, flew the family above and around Omaha in 2010. The family used this photo as their family Christmas card last year.