

NORTH DAKOTA AVIATION HALL OF FAME

Wilbur E. Brewer

Inducted: 1998



Mr. Brewer returned to the family farming operation at Bowman, North Dakota after serving in the Army Air Corp during WW II and became an early provider of aerial application service in southwestern North Dakota. Aerial application was a new and effective way to control crop pests and disease but the damage caused by hail continued to have serious impact on the area's agricultural economy.

During the 1950's, losses were so high that crop insurance became unavailable and many area farmers were facing financial disaster. Wilbur Brewer was a part of a group that investigated the new and often controversial cloud modification projects then in operation across the country. In 1961, Mr. Brewer's company, Weather Modification, Inc., was founded and began an experimental project in Bowman County using aircraft to deliver cloud seeding agents to targeted thunderstorm cells. This project, later known as the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project, remains in

operation today and is the longest running hail suppression project in the world.

Through Mr. Brewer's efforts, aviation students at the University of North Dakota receive weather modification training in the classroom and are then placed as intern copilots in weather modification programs where they have gained invaluable experience in flying in and around thunderstorms. Many of the more than 200 young pilots who have been in the program have gone on to careers in commercial aviation.

During Mr. Brewer's thirty years in command, there were no serious project related injuries. It is estimated that around 30,000 hours were logged by project aircraft in and around thunderstorms, half of the time in the dark, often with relatively inexperienced pilots. This outstanding safety record in dangerous flying conditions is a tribute to Mr. Brewer's emphasis on safety and insistence on reliable well-maintained twin engine aircraft.

Mr. Brewer is recognized internationally for his leadership, experience, knowledge, and innovative techniques in the development of the weather modification technology which has resulted in reduced hail damage in North Dakota and around the world.