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Looking for eggventure

Aviation club started in Orangeburg keeps up 75-year-old tradition

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The South Carolina Breakfast Club was started in 1938 to give pilots a chance to come together at various airports. Members will return to the club's birthplace, Orangeburg, next month.

SPECIAL TO THE T&D

“Nothing will stop a pilot from flying,” Gerald Ballard says. He’s seen that dedication first hand as president of the South Carolina Breakfast Club for 34 years.

Every other Sunday morning since 1938, except during World War II when there was gas rationing, a group of aviation enthusiasts has visited airports around South Carolina and surrounding states for breakfast.

Since the initial meeting, led by Orangeburg jeweler Thomas Summers, the SCBC has been flying high. The club will celebrate its 75th Anniversary on Nov. 3 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. where it all started: the Orangeburg Municipal Airport.

With more than 8,000 members and bi-weekly attendance exceeding 400, every member of SCBC has a shared interest in all things aviation related. For \$6 they enjoy a hot Southern breakfast including bacon and eggs, and a chance to share their lifetime bond.



“Anyone with a passion for flying is encouraged to attend. Once you’re a member, you’re a member for life,” said Valerie Anderson, SCBC documentarian and pilot. There are no membership dues.

“We’re geared towards exposing citizens to aviation, networking and creating community partnerships,” Ballard said.

Who comes to these breakfast meetings? Commercial, business and recreational flyers and local residents.

“Pilots come from as far as Syracuse, N.Y. to fellowship with us,” Ballard said.

The South Carolina Breakfast Club has acted as a prototype for other clubs across the nation, but none have seen such success.



A pilot since age of 20, the Aiken native says that “South Carolina has a different breed of people. They’re not highfalutin, they’re down to earth.”

Ballard said the breakfast club is about flying and fellowship and says “this is not a money-making club. In fact, we lose money.”

Ballard, the owner of Twin Lakes airport, says SCBC belongs to the people.

“When I travel across the state, I get to know a lot of nice people. They’re first-class people,” Ballard said.

Anderson said there are three traditions observed at each meeting:

The “bouncing ball”: This is awarded to the pilot who was observed making the worst landing.

“A few years ago my husband and I were given the ball in Winnsboro because we were flying too slow,” she said.

The belt: A leather belt embossed with “SOUTH CAROLINA BREAKFAST CLUB” is awarded to the pilot who flew the farthest.

The SCBC lottery or “landing fee”: Participants pay \$1 for a ticket. Anderson said “at the end of the meeting, the person with the winning ticket gets the pot of cash. We’re all about camaraderie, creating friendships and, of course, getting together to talk about airplanes.”

For more information, visit the South Carolina Breakfast Club’s Facebook page.