



Captain Vreeland

Courtesy Jimmy Vreeland

# Jimmy Vreeland:

## An Amazing Entrepreneur of Sussex County

By Joanne Guilfoil

*And another ag pilot and the most recent to be inducted into the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame. So, why would a Lower Shore crop duster be so highly honored? Easy, because there is way more to his story ... his history.*

*Jimmy is considered by many to be one of the "grandfathers of Delaware aviation education". He is also a kind and humble gentleman and is clearly a living legend.*

### Best Flight Instructor on the East Coast

Jimmy's career as a flight instructor is primarily his most outstanding contribution to Delaware's aviation community. But before teaching anyone to fly, he had to first learn how to fly safely and very well. And he did. He learned from the best, Mr. John Reed of Laurel, DE. Then at age 18, Jimmy flew for Cal Hollis and serviced the alfalfa-harvesting equipment called "wafer machines". As a young man, he flew into fields where the machines broke down. After logging in over 200 hours of barnstorming-type flying in one year, he began teaching in Laurel for Mr. John Reed.

During the late 60s Jimmy taught hundreds of students, with many on the GI Bill. And many more came long distances because of his reputation in flight instruction at Laurel Airport. His students included family members such as Allen Chorman then his brother Ron, and generations such as Allen and his son Jeff Chorman. Former student Lt. William A. Willey DSP (Retired, 2008) said that Jimmy was "the best instructor on the East Coast."

### A Gentleman Duster

While on top of his game, Jimmy turned to crop-dusting, and he earned equal honors as an aerial applicator during the 70s. He flew out of Milford, then Greenwood, always working directly with farmers. He gave them the most current and best information, in an honest and direct manner. Former DE Agriculture Secretary Ed Kee knew Jimmy and his ag work in the 70s said "...he was always a gentleman".



Courtesy Jimmy Vreeland

Jimmy and his son Shawn

### Senior Aviation Statesman

Once again on top of his game, Jimmy turned to commercial flight and then flight instruction. He flew for Piedmont Airlines out of Salisbury, then became a "check airman". This meant he approved the flying skills of pilots (after their training in an airplane or simulator) before they could carry passengers



Courtesy Jimmy Vreeland

Jimmy and his Ag Cat

on board. During the 80s & 90s Jimmy also logged in over 30,000 hours of safe flying in 102 different aircraft! But that was not all he did back then.

### A Pilot's Pilot

During the early 80s Jimmy also flew in area airshows during the summer months. His daily grind for a few hot weeks began with crop dusting in the early morning hours, then flying aerobatic maneuvers in an airshow close to home, then crop-dusting in the evening, until dark. As then Secretary Ed Kee recalled one day in 2016, it was just this diverse set of skills that "Jim brought to the cockpit with each flight".

Jimmy's colleagues in the aerial application business in Sussex County still call him a "pilot's pilot". Some students regard him as the "grandfather of Delaware aviation education". Now the rest of us know him as an honored Sussex County entrepreneur.

Resources:  
 Chorman, A. Letter of Nomination for James Vreeland to Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame  
 Guilfoil, JK. "Flying over Delmarva: Spray Planes, Banner Planes & Bi-Planes"  
 Guilfoil, JK. Cover Letter on James Vreeland to Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame



Courtesy Jimmy Vreeland and Robert Blasdel

Jimmy and daughter Dawn and the Pitts Special



Courtesy Jimmy Vreeland and Robert Blasdel

Jimmy flying over soybeans

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