

Cedar Hills Pub



Even for a McMenamins establishment the propellers, gauges and other aeronautic accoutrements that dress up this pub seem completely out of place to some. That is, until you learn that the Beaverton area was once a forerunner in all phases of early aviation, and that the heart of it all was right here where the Cedar Hills pub now stands. For close to 40 years, this was the site of the Bernard airport.

Before this spot was an airfield, however, even before the dream of flight was near to being reality, this was the land of William and Susan Hall. The Halls came to the Northwest in 1845 as part of the infamous group that Stephen Meek led astray from the Oregon Trail. Meek led more than 200 wagons on his "shortcut" through the arid deserts of central Oregon toward the eastern slopes of the Cascades. Unable to find water the group turned north, and by the time they reached The Dalles more than 23 settlers had perished. Today, the "Meek Cutoff" remains one of the most infamous routes along the Oregon Trail.

By 1900, the Halls had divided up their land, and this spot was a working farm belonging to the Bernard family. The Bernards had emigrated to the Pacific Northwest from Europe sometime in the 1890s with the promise of a better life.

In the early 1930s, Beaverton was home

to a bustling airplane-building movement. What started in the late '20s as a cottage industry—with hobbyists constructing the planes they flew—evolved into an active, small-scale manufacturing trade. It was during this time that Charlie Bernard, an aviation hobbyist himself, developed an airfield on a portion of his family's farm. What began as a crude landing strip became Oregon's first privately owned airfield, and for nearly four decades served noncommercial pilots and the local aviation community. The field offered a basic airstrip and hangars for "garaging" planes, and it became a favorite testing ground for plane builders, barnstormers and hobbyists alike.

During its lifetime, Bernard's strip was credited as being the oldest continuously operated airport in Oregon and it was arguably the busiest noncommercial airport in the United States. Another distinction was

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its service as a terminal for the shortest airmail route in the United States. During the 1930s, planes carrying the U.S. mail hopped the six miles back and forth between Portland and Bernard's strip, but service ceased when the

Postal Service realized land travel was more economical than the air route.

A lively assortment of pilots could be found at Bernard's field. Well-known folks such as George Yates, Archie Olson and Guy Carr all touched down here periodically, but the most famous of the pilots who frequented the strip had to be Tex Rankin. Tex was one of the most renowned pilots in the world through the 1920s and '30s, holding numerous stunt flying, endurance and acrobatic records. During his long career he flew for Hollywood movies, trained aspiring stunt flyers and earned the distinction of World Champion

Acrobatic Pilot. A custom propeller made for Tex now hangs overhead in the Cedar Hills pub, overshadowed by the newer, flashier props mounted nearby. Tex's career and life ended when his plane crashed outside of Klamath Falls in 1947. It was said that he was heading for Bernard's Airfield.

Construction of the Sunset Highway was completed in 1948, opening the relatively isolated areas of the West Hills to the suburban growth that followed WWII. By the late '60s, with interest in the area escalating and the economy changing rapidly, the small airfield's property taxes began to soar. Bernard stubbornly refused to raise the rent and usage fees for his flying customers and simply couldn't afford the tax increases. It is rumored that he, along with a group of local pilots, approached the county commissioners with the airfield's tax receipt of \$24,000, asking if they had mistakenly put the decimal point in the wrong place. They had not. In February 1969, bulldozers chased the last planes away.

Mirroring changes in the community, a shopping center was constructed here soon after the airfield was razed. The Beaverton Mall, one of the first development projects in the area, included a separate smaller building that for years housed a steak restaurant, North's Chuck House. Since January 1992, that same building has been the quarters of McMenamins Cedar Hills Pub, and with it the spirit of fun and adventure that was temporarily grounded took flight once more.

The pub celebrates the site's aviation heritage, but there is another remarkable tale hidden amongst the aeronautic decor: the two rare and exceptional Brunswick Anniversary pool tables. The first table, a 4 1/2 x 9-foot Anniversary model

began its life back in 1948 in a pool hall in Washington. It remained there until that place closed down in the early '70s, when a patron purchased it. The table remained at his home for another 26 years until it was offered to McMenamins about the time it was decided that Cedar Hills could use a billiard table.

With the new table in place it was immediately obvious that a match was needed.

This was a tall order; in the words of pool table dealer



Pat Sheehen, "locating another Brunswick Anniversary is akin to finding another original Mona Lisa." In the hopes of at least finding something similar, Sheehan was asked to take an inventory of the old pool tables McMenamins has stored in the cavernous basement of Ringlers Pub. Bingo!! Buried under old uniforms and restaurant equipment, his search yielded a rare 1946 Brunswick Anniversary Carom table. The 4 x 8-foot table was built for Carom—not pool—and thus had no pockets. But with a little attention, and some help from a diamond savor saw, the 55-year old find proved a great match for the larger Anniversary.

With its two Brunswick tables, pleasant patio, hangar-style doors and airy inside, McMenamins Cedar Hills Pub is still a popular landing spot for lively characters from all over the community to come and refill their tanks. While Tex and his pals no longer buzz by—inverted—just a few feet off the ground, the place retains a buzz all its own. So

plan a safe landing at one of our tables, enjoy some food and drink and consider doing a bit of barnstorming of your own!

