

BEDFORD BULLETIN

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Pilot makes the most of high-flying proposal

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By John Barnhart

It took Allie Murray a little time to get her feet back on the ground after her boyfriend, Jeremy Dillinger, proposed to her. A major reason for this is that they were in a small aircraft at the time.

Dillinger, a 2006 Liberty University graduate, is a private pilot. He's originally from Seattle, Wash., and met Murray after he came here for college. They met at Crosspoint Wesleyan Church in Lynchburg where she attended.

"Her family had adopted me," Dillinger said.

Initially, they were just friends, but that relationship changed over the last five years. When it came time to pop the question, Dillinger wanted to do something different. That something different involved writing the proposal in large letters in a hayfield and taking Murray on a flight over it.



This is what Allie Murray saw in a Bedford county hayfield.

He found a hayfield he could borrow on Ralph and Ivylyn Hardy's farm, Locust Grove Farm, in Bedford County. The Hardys, who celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary on July 7, no longer own the farm, but the current owners, John and Stephanie Hemenway, were happy to accommodate him.

Stephanie Hemenway said that they found the Hardy's farm on the Internet.

"We came to look at the farm and put a contract on it that day," she said.

They arrived not knowing anybody, but the Hardy family showed them around

"They adopted us," she said.

Hemenway said that there has been a Hardy on that property since 1803. There still is a Hardy there. Ralph Hardy's sister, Jane Hardy has an apartment in the house.

One of the things they discovered was that one of their neighbors, Kevin Corwin, and John Hemenway's brother-in-law, know each other. Hemenway's sister and his brother-in-law were in Corwin's wedding. Corwin, who attends Dillinger and Murray's church, is the one who introduced Dillinger to the Hemenways.

Stephanie Hemenway recalls the young man asking, "Can we borrow your hayfield?"

"Jeremy came the next day with two-foot wide rolls of paper," John Hemenway said.

Dillinger and two friends spelled the words out in the field and weighted them with bricks.

Hemenway kept an eye on the writing and did some minor repairs.

"I didn't have to do much patching," he said.

Murray didn't know what was about to happen when Dillinger asked her if she wanted to go flying. Thursday afternoon was great flying weather.

"I like going up flying, so he was just going to take me," Murray said.

As they flew over the farm, Murray was talking to Dillinger and not looking down.

"Hey, there's something written in that field," he said, drawing her attention to it.

"My jaw dropped open and then I couldn't close it for a few minutes," she recalled.

Then, there was the issue of putting the ring on her finger. He had it in his pocket, but it took him about 30 seconds to get it out, longer than he expected.

"I had to get it [the airplane] stable first and at altitude," he said.

Murray didn't notice the time.

"I was still processing," she said.

The couple haven't set a date yet. She starts her senior year at Liberty University in the fall, so the wedding will wait until after she graduates.

Then, they hope to head for the mission field.

"Ultimately, I'd like to do mission aviation work," he said.

Or, maybe he would do information technology work for a mission organization. Dillinger has his degree in information technology and is currently employed in that line of work. He and his fiancée have already talked about where they'd like to go.

"We both love the idea of Brazil," he said.

Murray, who is getting a degree in teaching English as a second language, wants to be a Bible translator. They've been in contact with Wycliffe Bible Translators and that organization's technical arm JAARS. JAARS stands for Jungle Aviation and Radio Service. It's been around for 60 years and provides both mission pilots and computer services to Wycliffe Bible translators in the field.

"I really want the rest of the world to know the salvation they have in Christ," said Murray, explaining her career decision.

She's been on five short term mission trips, to Brazil, Mexico and Ecuador, which gave her a taste of a missionary's life. She also speaks some Portuguese and has friends in Brazil. Her Brazilian friends only speak Portuguese, but she said that she's been able to communicate fine with them.

Dillinger said that he came to Liberty because his parents wanted him to try a Christian university. He looked at a number of schools and decided to give Liberty a try as his pastor's daughter had gone to college there. He tried it, liked it, and stayed.

"I felt at home at Liberty," he said. "It's where God led me."



Allie Murray and Jeremy Dillinger after their flight. The ring on Murray's left hand indicates that Dillinger got the answer he was looking for.

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