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People of Spirit

Loving what we do

It's been tough for Packers fans this first week of March 2008. Brett Favre has announced he's retiring from football. A sense of disbelief fills the air.

I'm a diehard Green Bay Packers fan. Have been since 1962 when I started watching bands perform at halftime. (Yes, back then halftime wasn't taken up with sportscasters waxing eloquently about what we had already seen and formed our own opinions about.) Little by little I'd hang around to watch more of the second half, and my older brother, bless his soul, indulged me by explaining the game to me. Bart Starr and the Packers were coming into their "glory years," and I was hooked. Kinda like people get hooked on flying.

A football era is definitely coming to an end with Brett's retirement. My lasting memory of Brett will be of him running to the sideline in Super Bowl XXXI after he threw a touchdown pass to Andre Rison. Helmet in hand, he was grinning ear-to-ear proudly proclaiming the Packers No. 1.

But, Brett has decided to retire not because he doesn't love playing football or doesn't want to play the game anymore. He's just not up to the hours of pre-game study. As he said in his retirement press conference, "Playing football isn't just three hours on Sunday; it takes a lot more commitment than that."

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It might be a bit of a stretch, but I think there's a lesson here for fliers...and others. The fun is flying (or playing the game), but we have responsibilities beyond the fun. If we're going to be good pilots, we need to keep in shape mentally and physically. We have a responsibility to do the studying required so we're up to date on whatever regulatory or other changes affect the kind of flying we do. We have a responsibility to keep ourselves in good physical condition so we can respond and react as needed to problems in flight...even if we're sport pilots who don't have to keep an active medical. When we don't want to meet those responsibilities, then we don't get to have the fun anymore, and we have to take ourselves out of the game. That's what we owe our teammates—other pilots.

There's something else we can learn from Brett. As recently retired Packers President Bob Harlan related, "Brett changed a room when he walked in, no matter who was in the room." There's little doubt in my mind that was because of his spirit. He loves and cares about football, and he played with the enthusiasm of a kid playing a sandlot game. Because of his spirit, he affected the entire game.

That's borne out by the fact the No. 4 jerseys sell throughout the country, not just in Wisconsin. He wasn't afraid to show his spirit and share his enthusiasm, and for that the sport of football is better.

EAAers are people of spirit about flying, and we're pretty good at sharing that enthusiasm with others, but we don't have too many aviation enthusiasts in the world yet. And the type of flying we love is facing

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some challenges. As detailed in Hotline, starting on page 8, the FAA is reviewing its policy on the 51 percent rule and has hinted that it may make some major changes. EAA is asking members to write the FAA and share their amateur-built experiences. How to do that is explained in the Hotline article. This is not a time to sit on the sidelines and let someone else carry the game. It's a time to step up and support what we believe in. That's what people of spirit do.

Lastly, I know football will live on in Green Bay, but it won't be quite the same. 