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night. I don't think people realize just how great an experience those music shows are at the Fairgrounds. I played there when I was a kid. I was on stage with Waylon Jennings at the Music Hall. Actually, that was the last time Waylon was at Anderson Music Hall.

"It's special for me to play at The Hall," Townsend said. "All the people I grew up with come out, it's an exciting atmosphere, the family will be here. It's just a special time personally."

The Fair is rich in tradition, historically known for first class musical performances, fun carnival rides, and a picturesque glimpse into North Georgia's rich history and culture.

It's a family affair every year. Following the sneak peak on Thursday, the Fair runs from Friday through July 29. It features Country and Gospel performances to good old Rock 'N' Roll shows, the Fair will host several renowned musical acts in the 2,900-seat Anderson Music Hall throughout the 10 days the Fair is here.

Performers include legends Waymore's Outlaws, Greenwood, Crystal Gayle, Marty Stuart, Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, Jim Ed Brown, Helen Cornelius, and Gospel singers The McKameys and The Primitives.

The venue also will serve as the site of the 2012 Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant.

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason described what visitors to the Fair have to look forward to.

"Attendees will have the opportunity to step back in time as they watch educational demonstrations such as blacksmithing, moonshining,



Lee Greenwood

soap-making, and hominy making in the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds' very own Pioneer Village," Thomason said. "Visitors can tour restored authentic and antique buildings including a one-room schoolhouse, a general store, a blacksmith shop, and an old mountain home moved to the Fairgrounds to preserve the area's rich history."

While visitors get to experience North Georgia's past first-hand, they also will be able to listen to tales of life as it once was from local experts.

Art lovers will enjoy strolling through the juried arts and crafts show which is set up throughout the Pioneer Village and Craft Village each day of the Fair.

The show features talented artisans from around the country. Visitors to the Exhibit Hall will be able to look back at the Fair's history.

They will see pictures of many music legends including Conway Twitty, Patty Loveless, and Alan Jackson who have performed at the Fair, as well as interesting memorabilia from past events.

The Exhibit Hall also

is home to a large selection of antique farm equipment, and during the Fair, locals will share stories of how the equipment was once used and how vital the equipment was to farm life.

Thomason extended a personal invite to visitors to the GMF.

"Come visit our brand new Anderson-Paris Park located inside the Fairgrounds," Thomason said. "It was built in honor of Elois Anderson and Dick Paris for their dedication and faithfulness to the city of Hiwassee for many years. The park consists of a new stage and will be featuring musical performers throughout the Fair."

No Fair would be complete without the smells of hot funnel cakes, sweet cotton candy, and hamburgers cooking on the grill. The Fair also offers barbecue, smoked trout, and many other festival favorites. The food booths are run by local civic organizations and serve as a fund raising tool for non-profit groups in Towns County.

"The Georgia Mountain Fair is a non-profit organization, a project of the Towns County Lions Club," Thomason said. "We want to thank all of our Lions Club members and volunteers who help make this event possible. This is a wonderful, affordable event for the entire family."

Tickets for the Fair are \$5 Gate admission, \$10 Music Show tickets (Gate Admission required), \$2 parking, and children under 10 are admitted free at gate.

For a complete listing of scheduled activities, free admission days, free carnival ride days, and musical performance times, visit [www.GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com](http://www.GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com).

## Flyboys ... continued from page 1A

old, T Bentley successfully logged his first solo flight last week.

Bentley, a rising senior, has been working, along with Gessmann, with Certified Flight Instructor Stephen Thompson of Blairsville.

Bentley comes from a lineage of pilots, as his grandfather flew more than 50 B-24 missions over Europe, most notably, the Ploesti air raids during World War II.

Bentley has always wanted to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and take to the skies.

"He has always wanted to fly," mother Jacque Bentley said. "Since he was little. He used to say that he wanted to fly a space shuttle."

Gessmann also carries a military pedigree with both of his grandfathers having served during World War II.

However it was the Young Eagles Day at the Blairsville Municipal Airport when Gessmann really caught the flying bug.

"That was when I really wanted to start flying," Gessmann said. "But both of my grandfathers worked around planes. One was a pilot in World War II and the other one built planes."

Both are planning on taking their flying skills to the Armed Forces someday.

T Bentley is currently working on gaining admission to the Air Force Academy, which he visited last month. However, admission into the Colorado Springs program is no easy task.

"The Air Force Academy would be his dream," said Jacque Bentley. "We're working on getting him ready and getting his congressional

nominations right now. The applications for school have not even opened up yet so we'll be doing that at the end of this month."

Gessmann also is looking ahead to a career in the military and hopes to join the Navy someday and fly from an aircraft carrier.

"I plan on going to Embry-Riddle and majoring in their pilot program and Aeronautical Science," Gessman said. "Then join the Navy ROTC program so I can commission in."

As T Bentley successfully completed his first solo flight, his family, best friend, and instructor watched from the ground.

"The truth of the matter is, landing is absolutely the hardest thing about flying," Thompson said. "They should call us landers instead of fliers because landing is where the money is made."

"Flying is the easy part," added Gessmann. "It's all the other stuff that's difficult."

T Bentley and Gessmann both said that they couldn't be more thankful or have a better instructor than Thompson.

"Stephen is very knowledgeable and lots of fun," T Bentley said. "He's a cool guy to be around." "I really like him a lot too," Gessmann said. "He's a fun and energetic guy and a really good instructor."

As T Bentley soared 1,000 feet over Union County, Jacque Bentley spoke about the butterflies that T Bentley was feeling leading up to the flight.

"T told me this morning that he was more nervous than

he is the morning of a football game and he gets pretty nervous on the morning of a football game," she said.

Thompson affirmed to Jacque Bentley that he knew that T was up to the challenge.

"T sent me a text at 11 p.m. last night saying, 'I'm going to rock this thing tomorrow,' Thompson said. I told him that's the attitude I want to see right there."

When asked what was more nerve-racking, landing a plane or staring down a blitz on the gridiron, T Bentley didn't hesitate.

"It's easier facing a blitz than landing a plane," he said. "It's more nerve-racking to land the plane because you have to think about it for so long. When you get sacked, you get hit and then it's over." "Just seeing the runway from the air, you know you have to make all these small adjustments to land the plane safely," he said. "And during that time waiting all kinds of thoughts fill your head."

Gessmann's favorite part of being a pilot is doing spin training and the rush that comes with the territory.

"I pulled six G's which is what the military pilots are doing," Gessman said. "That's the most fun part. It's an adrenaline rush."

Six G's means the force of gravity on his body is six times more than normal.

Anything Gessman or T Bentley set their minds to, they will accomplish.

"Just as they excel academically and in sports, they do the same with his flying," Thompson said. "They are obviously consummate professionals."



Above, Morgan, Jacque, T, Stephen Thompson and Tsali. Below, Caleb Gessmann. T and Caleb have completed their solo flights, as the process of becoming licensed pilots continues. Both young men have interests in pursuing a military career as pilots. Their instructor, Stephen Thompson said he has confidence that both will do well in their career pursuits.