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Adams plans to fly on Wings of Hope

By WILLIAM M. MICHAEL
Herald & Review Lifestyle Writer

TAYLORVILLE — Lyle Adams is waiting for an airplane and a passport. With those he'll be able to work for nothing for a year.

The 47-year-old Taylorville native hopes to leave in the next few weeks for Belize in Central America, where he will fly a bush plane for Wings of Hope Inc., a St. Louis-based charitable organization.

Lyle will fly supply and emergency missions to remote outposts in the young nation, formerly known as British Honduras. He will pilot a single-engine, high-wing Maule airplane already on duty in the nation of about 150,000 people.

Like his predecessor, Lyle will fly where he is needed at the request of the Belize government, religious groups or any organization or persons in need of help that cannot afford private airplane service.

When Lyle receives his passport, he will ferry a surplus Wings of Hope airplane to a buyer in Belize.

WINGS OF HOPE solicits donations of airplanes, parts and equipment from around the world. Surplus items are sold and the money is used to purchase equipment that the non-profit, non-sectarian charitable organization needs.

A tall, affable man who laughs easily, Lyle turns intently serious when he explains why he volunteered to work for nothing in a job where he may have to pay some of his expenses.

"We've had an urge to do something unselfish, to help people less fortunate than ourselves," he said. The "we" includes his wife, Judy, who will join Lyle in Belize in two or three months "if things work out."

Because of the political unrest in Central America, Lyle wants to be sure Belize is safe for Judy, who said, "I can hardly wait to go." She wants to dive in the Caribbean Sea's clear, reef-filled waters off the nation's eastern shore.

Lyle also wants to determine if

he can handle the job, although he is quite sure he can. After all, he was an Alaskan bush pilot for two years.

DEEPLY RELIGIOUS, the Adamses attend Davis Memorial Christian Church in Taylorville. Until recently, Lyle said, the money he earned in a succession of military, state and federal jobs went to raising their own family of four children: Scott, now 29, a civilian seaman; Lindsey Schaefer, 27, of Waukegan; Lori Sassatelli, 23, of Taylorville, and Brad, 22, in the U.S. Navy and stationed in Memphis.

"Now we're fortunate to be in a position to help people," he said. "We also have our health. (Pilots must pass periodic physical examinations.) I want to put my skills as a pilot to use to help people while I can. I recognize I am getting older. I don't feel I should delay any longer. The time is right."

LYLE AND JUDY determined that income from real estate investments they have made will pay the bills while they are in Belize. Those investments were made as they moved about the United States in Lyle's careers in the Air Force, Illinois Department of Conservation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They paid cash for things they bought. "We don't owe anything," Lyle said.

Their desire to help people was triggered about a year ago when they were watching a World Vision program on television. A pilot who flew relief and emergency medical missions in Africa was interviewed.

"I thought that would be a good use for my flying skills," Lyle said. A short time later, he learned of Wings of Hope and talked with William D. Edwards, executive director of the organization. After looking closely at Lyle's credentials, especially at his Alaskan flying experience, Wings of Hope accepted him a month ago.

LYLE SAID HE always has had

an interest in flying and the outdoors. He kept those interests alive during his nine years in the Air Force, hunting and fishing and flying whenever he could. He became a computer expert in the Air Force and helped assemble a computer-controlled worldwide information retrieval system at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

He left the Air Force to earn a bachelor's degree in wildlife management and a master's degree in outdoor recreation at Southern Illinois University. He joined the Illinois Department of Conservation in 1970 and in 1975 was appointed executive director of the Illinois Abandoned Mined Land Reclamation Council.

"I was getting off my career track," Lyle said. "I wanted back in fish and wildlife." He joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1977 where he held a succession of management and administrative jobs in Washington, D.C. He got his pilot's license while stationed in Washington.

HIS WORK THERE took him further away from the outdoors, so in September 1979 he transferred to the Northern Alaska Ecological Services of the Fish and Wildlife Service as a wildlife biologist and pilot.

Until November 1981, Lyle was in charge of crews working with developers of Alaska's natural resources to minimize detrimental effects development might have on the environment. Lyle flew his crews to far-flung outposts and kept them supplied. He flew a Canadian-made DeHavilland Beaver, "the best bush plane ever built," Lyle said.

He left the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1981 "because I wanted to do something different." He and Judy returned to Taylorville where Lyle has been dealing in real estate with his brother, Dick Adams.

That work will be put on hold soon while Lyle once again ferries supplies and people to and from remote outposts.



Lyle Adams of Taylorville and his wife, Judy.

Photo by Bill Michael

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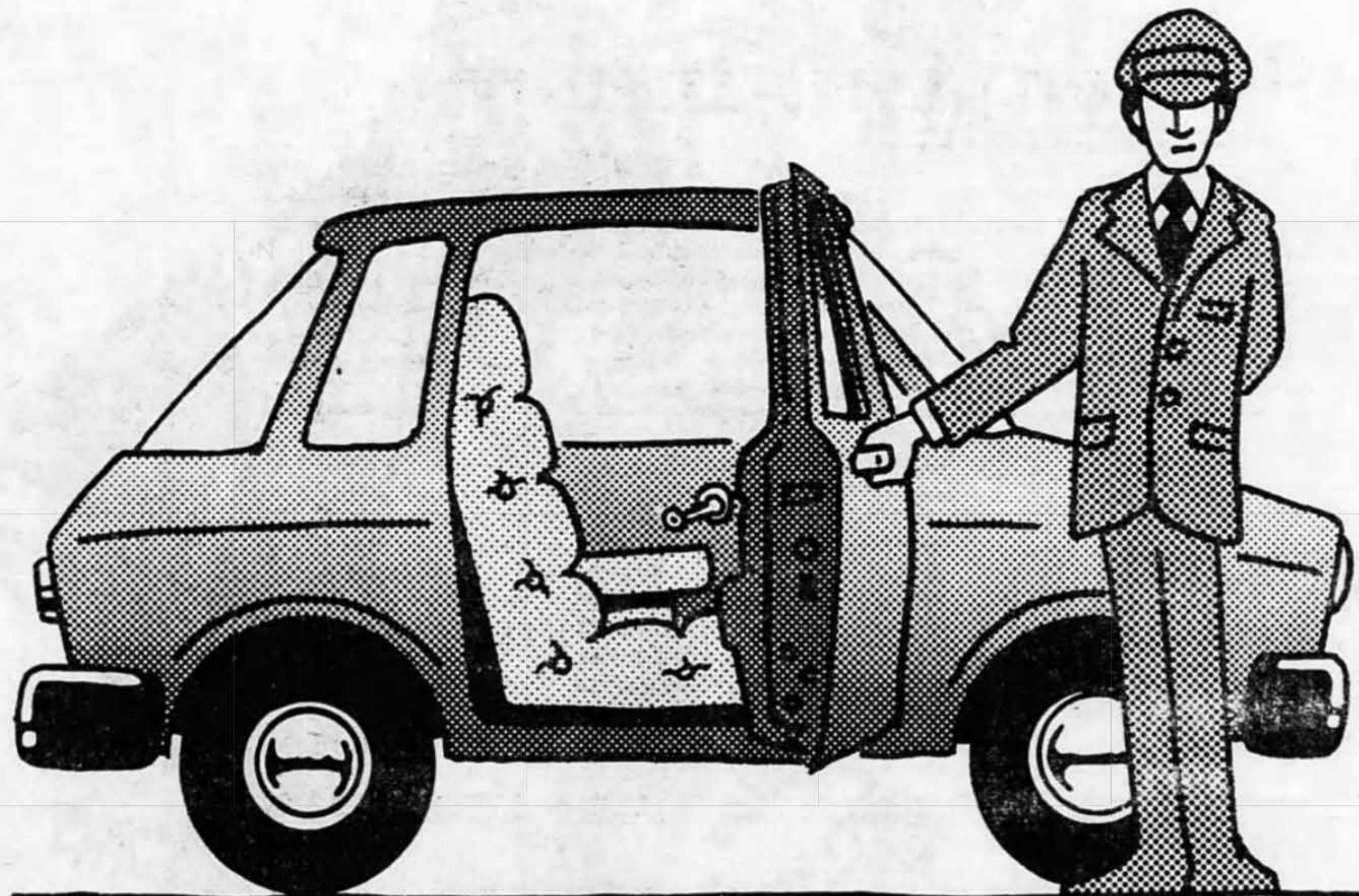
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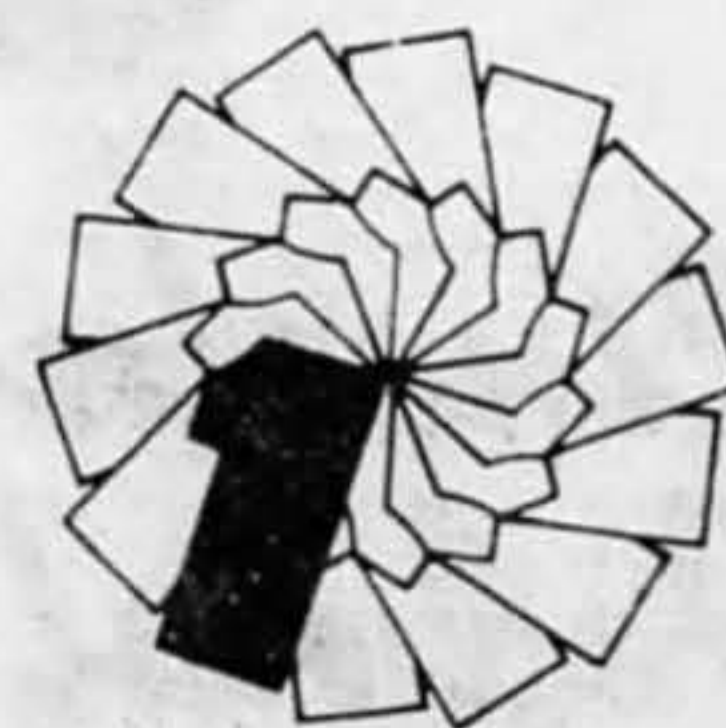
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