

Flying High Again

After simple procedures restore his vision, this retired pilot enjoys complete freedom from corrective lenses.

PREMIER EYE CLINIC

Q. JOCELYN GE, MD, PHD

Retired commercial pilot Dick Amell knows more than just how to fly a plane: he and his flying partners have actually refurbished an old airplane.

"My two partners and I rebuilt a 1946 plane that had been crashed," say Dick. "We finished rebuilding it around the end of December 2008 and have flown it twelve hours since then."

Unfortunately for Dick, a decline in his vision over the years was putting a damper on his ability to fly.

"Of course, I'm retired now, so I just fly for fun," explains the active 83-year-old. "When somebody has their instrument rating, they have to practice so many times 'under the hood' periodically; the hood shields everything but the instrument panel. Well, I was riding with one of my friends, and he was under the hood. I was the safety pilot, which meant I was looking all around, back and forth, up and down, making sure that nobody else was near us."

"He came out of a turn and said, 'Wow, where did that one come from?' Another plane had passed right across in front of us about a quarter of a mile away."

"I said, 'Gee, I never saw them,' but I knew I should have. That made me realize something was wrong."

Dick knew he had cataracts from a previous eye exam, but he had not gotten them addressed.

"Even with my glasses, I couldn't make things out really clearly like I could before from a distance," he explains. "My previous eye doctor had said I wasn't ready yet, that there was no need to do anything. But after a while, I began thinking, *I'm going to get a second opinion.*"

"I started checking around with different people, and another pilot recommended Dr. Ge."

Simple treatment

Q. Jocelyn Ge, MD, PhD, is the medical director of Premier Eye Clinic in Port Orange. She explains that cataracts should not necessarily be left to worsen, particularly in the case of someone who drives or flies a plane.

"It's important for cataract patients to know that over the past few years, cataract surgery has changed tremendously," she reports. "It's not like the old days, when doctors considered a cataract procedure to be a major operation. Patients used to have to stay in the hospital and wear a patch over their eye afterwards. They also needed to stop their aspirin or other blood thinners for a few days to prepare for surgery. But modern cataract surgery takes only a few minutes. It is an outpatient procedure that usually requires no injections, no stitches, and no patching afterwards. Patients no longer need to take the risk of stopping their blood thinners if they have a heart condition. There is a much faster recovery time. In fact, most patients see fairly well very soon after the surgery."

"For a patient like Dick, whose quality of life is severely affected by cataracts, there's no need to postpone cataract surgery, to spend all that time just waiting and being unable to work or to enjoy life."

"As cataracts grow, they also become

more thickened and make the eye more crowded. Because of this, some people develop increased eye pressure, which puts them at risk for glaucoma. In Dick's case, he had been followed and tested for years on his borderline eye pressure. After the cataract surgery, not only did his vision improve, but his eye pressure has also been lowered to a much safer level, so he won't have to worry about developing glaucoma in the future," adds Dr. Ge.

See better and look younger

Dr. Ge notes that Dick's upper field of vision was also a problem, as a result of his drooping eyelids.

"Dick's eyelids were draping over the eyes, and he appeared to be almost falling asleep from his eyelids drooping."

Excess skin on the upper eyelids can obstruct a patient's field of view, interfering with peripheral vision, as in Dick's case. Sagging eyelids can also lead to secondary physical complaints: some people who are dealing with excess tissue above their eyes find themselves attempting to remedy the situation by using the muscles in their foreheads to lift the drooping skin of their eyelids. This can result in facial tension leading to headaches.

"Quite often, the appearance of heavy, bulging eyelids will make a patient look older and tired, too," Dr. Ge adds.

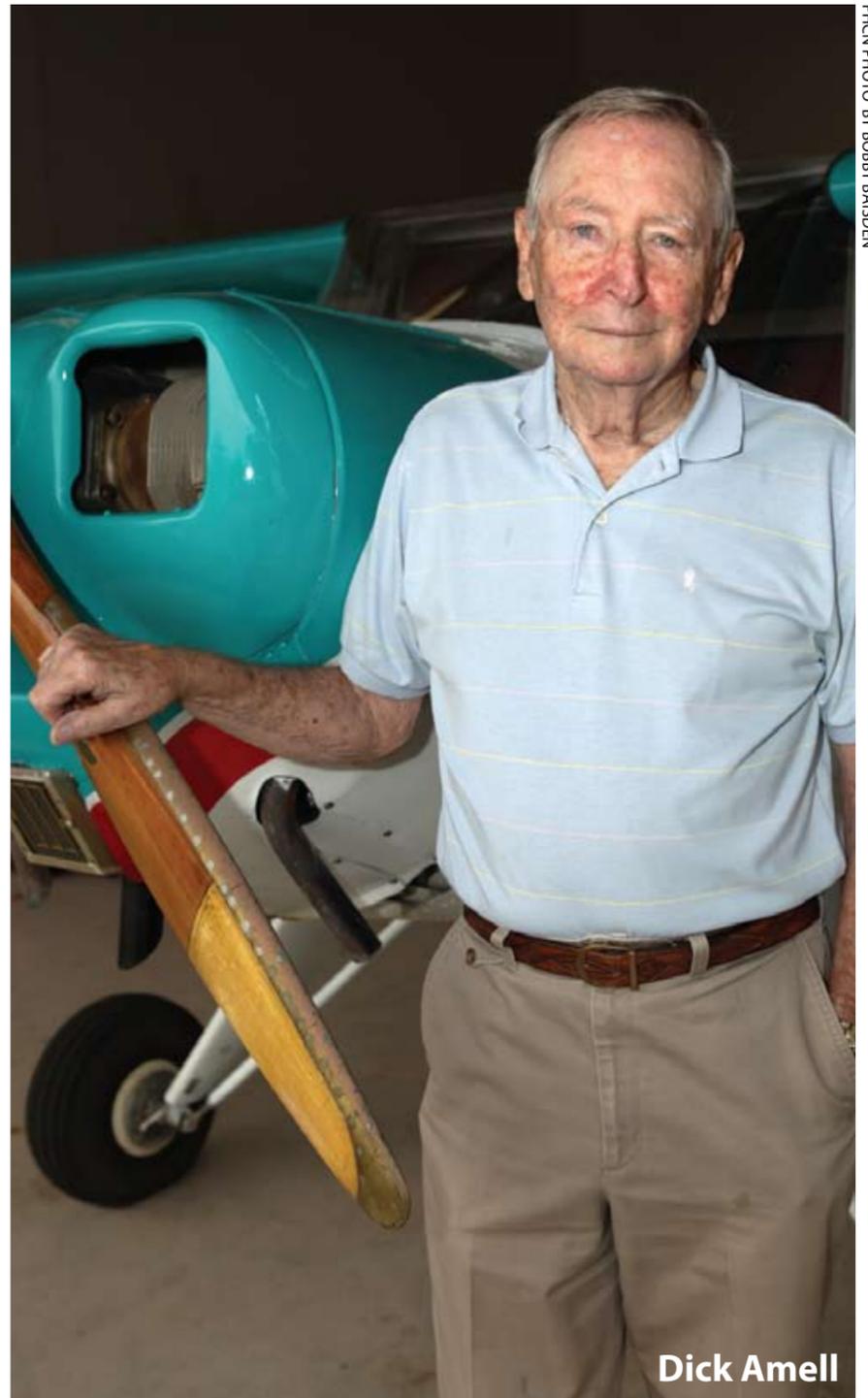
Eyelid puffiness or bagginess afflicts both men and women. It is sometimes hereditary and often becomes more pronounced with age. Fortunately, there are safe, effective, and cosmetically appealing options for patients who have droopy eyelids. They involve removing excess skin from the eyelids, a procedure called blepharoplasty, raising the eyebrow (brow lift), or elevating the hard plate inside the eyelid itself, a procedure called *ptosis repair*. "The selection of the specific eyelid procedure is patient-dependent," explains Dr. Ge, "because not all droopy eyelids are the same. Some patients may need a combination of procedures."

"We do eyelid procedures in addition to eye surgeries to improve vision, such as cataract surgery," adds Dr. Ge. "Our goal is not only to get the patients to see better, but also to look and feel younger. Like the cataract surgery, these eyelid procedures are simple, fast, outpatient surgeries with a short recovery period."

Family atmosphere

Quality patient care is about more than just skill and knowledge, assures Dr. Ge. She and her staff create a cozy, family-friendly environment at Premier Eye Clinic. The "patients first" attitude is one that the entire office understands and stands by, and was no doubt a part of what made Dick so comfortable.

"I stay current on the newest ophthalmic advances, and my equipment remains the most advanced technology necessary for cataract and other eye surgeries," says Dr. Ge. "But it's just as important to a patient that you also have the willingness to take time to give them the attention they deserve. That means listening to their concerns, answering all their questions thoroughly, and making sure they



Dick Amell

FHCN PHOTO BY BOBBY BAIRDEN

Visit Premier Eye Clinic on the web at

www.premiereyeclinic.com

understand the instructions they need before and after their procedure.

"It may sound like a cliché to say that we put our patients first, but we really do. Our office is more of a family kind of atmosphere, with a very friendly, helpful staff. Consequently, patients feel comfortable and safe coming here."

Happy patient

For Dick, the cataract and eyelid procedures were equally quick and easy.

"It was great," he assures. "I just went in the morning and was in and out of there. I had no pain whatsoever."

Now that he is seeing clearly again, Dick says he was truly surprised by the sharpness of details and colors.

"I couldn't believe how bright the colors were and how great I can see," he marvels. "For example, I can read traffic signs from much further away now. Before, I had to be up fairly close, within fifty yards or so, to make those out. Now, I can read them from a distance, and I don't need glasses at all."

The eyelid surgery has restored his field of vision as well.

"They gave me a test where I was in a

darkened room and I saw specks of light pop up here and there. Before the surgery, I was missing all the ones above me, due to my eyelids obscuring that part of my vision. Afterwards, though, I could pick them all out."

Dick says he wouldn't be where he is today without Dr. Ge.

"I can't say enough about Dr. Ge. She's a terrific surgeon and a very nice person," he emphasizes. "She and her staff are really great, very polite, friendly, and pleasant. I actually look forward to going there."

"I'd recommend Dr. Ge to anybody."

FHCN—Michael J. Sabno

Your Vision, Our Commitment

Dr. Ge and the staff of Premier Eye Clinic look forward to meeting readers of *Volusia Health Care News*. The office is located at **1515 Herbert Street, Suite 208**, in Port Orange, telephone **(386) 788-6198**.



Q. Jocelyn Ge, MD, PhD, received her medical degree from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and her PhD from the University of California. She completed her internship at the University of Tennessee Medical Center at Knoxville and her Ophthalmology residency at the Tulane University Hospital and Clinics in New Orleans. In 2005, Dr. Ge was one of the ten ophthalmologists in the U.S. who received the prestigious American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Foundation research grant. She is active in research and has presented her results at major national conferences, including the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), ASCRS, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Most recently, she received the American Medical Association's Physician Recognition Award with Commendation for her achievement in continued medical education.