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On a wing and an oxygen tank

Val Seamons stepped onto the tarmac Thursday morning, eager for the flight of his life.

Since he was a child, he'd always dreamed of this day, and it was difficult to believe it was actually happening.

With the tubing of his oxygen tank tightly wound in his hand, Seamons, a hospice patient, stared up at the four-passenger Piper plane, about to embark on a day trip to one of the world's wonders.

On a normal day, Seamons — who suffers from emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease — would be sitting in his arm chair, attached to his oxygen hose and hardly able to walk across his Logan home.

But on Thursday, the pilot propped him up onto the wing of the aircraft and helped him into the co-pilot position.

Moments later, the plane left the Logan-Cache Airport, bound for the Grand Canyon.

Seamons, 67, fondly recalls viewing photos of the site as a child, but hadn't planned on seeing it for himself. After all, doctors have said he likely has fewer than six months to live.

So when Diane Crossley, a registered nurse with Hospice For Utah, asked Seamons a week ago if he wanted to visit the Grand Canyon, his face lit up immediately.

"He was very excited about it," Crossley said. "I expected him to not want to go, but he didn't even hesitate. He said, 'I'll be there.'"

Hospice for Utah, based in Draper, solicited the help of A Life's Wish, a nonprofit organization that grants wishes for seniors, in making the trip possible.

Judy Oeser, treasurer of A Life's Wish, came to the airport Thursday morning to meet Seamons.

"It means so much to us to see these senior citizens being able to fulfill their dreams," Oeser said.

Mt. Valley Home Medical supplied the medical equipment needed to make the trip possible. Crossley and another nurse brought six oxygen tanks onboard the plane for Seamons.

After about three hours in the air, the South Rim of the Grand Canyon came into view, and Seamons looked at the landscape through the plane's window.

"I wanted to take everything in all at once," he said. "My head was going around like a yo-yo."

Crossley added, "He was very quiet, which he normally isn't. He was just so fascinated. It was almost like he was speechless."

Seamons said he is grateful for the three organizations that fueled the experience.

"It really tells me they care," he said. "It's something I've always dreamed of doing, and it happened."