



ARION AIRCRAFT^{LLC}

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Inside This Issue:

Lightning of the Quarter	2
Sun-N-Fun 2016	4
News from the Factory	8
News from the Dealers	10
Current Lightning Dealers	12
News from Builders / Flyers	13
Upcoming Events	17
Look What the Wilts Built	19
Lightning of the Quarter and Pilot Spotlight Questions	20
Final Thoughts	21

Lightning of the Quarter - Rick Bernardi's Jet



Lightning of the Quarter

Article by Rick Bernardi

My interest in aviation began at about age 4 or 5 when my father built a piper cub model with a OK-60 engine that was very loud. (I still have the engine!) This was in the early 40's during WWII. We lived in Middletown, CT. and I remember seeing many warbirds overhead. I didn't know it at the time, but with Pratt & Whitney nearby many flights were from Rentschler Field. I remember covering my school books with paper bags and decorating them with drawings of P-40s, P-47s and P-51s. I was always looking up when I heard an airplane, wishing I was flying. (As I still do today)

Then life gets in the way, fast forward to year 2000. It was time to retire after a career in telecommunications and the wireless industry. Retirement got a little boring sooner than I expected, so I took out my bucket list and turned it upside down and lo and behold there was "learn to fly". I secretly took flying lessons until I soloed. One day (after I told my family what I was up to) I invited my son AJ to watch me fly solo. He said "you look like a rock skipping across the pond when you were landing". After getting my private license I bought a 1959 172 and flew over 100hrs/yr. for next 10 years or so. Loved flying to Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and Block Island for lunch. I've also flown over 115 Young Eagles.

In the fall of 2012, my son (now a captain in the USAF) offered me the opportunity to live with him and his wife in Vail, AZ. It was there at Lightning Aircraft West, I met Greg Hobbs and the Lightning. I had sold my 172 before I left CT and looking in the mirror convinced me it was time to get into Light Sport. The Lightning fit the bill for me as a nice cross country LSA. I took a demo ride and immediately signed up for the dealer assist program. (Perfect for a 74 yr. old!) I started the 5th of May 2013 and taxied the end of July. During this time my son was assigned to Nebraska and we moved the first of August. I returned to Greg's a few more times to finish installing the Auto-Pilot and got the Air Worthiness certificate on 10/27/2013, which happened to be my Dad's birthday. I made arrangements with Greg and H.L. Cooper, a Light Sport CFI, to fly off some hours and provide me with transition training. The following May, a year after I started building, HL and I flew the "Stars and Stripes" to its new home at KMLE. During the trip we spent some time at 13000', I still had about 6 months left on my medical. N120EB was built as an E-AB now flying as Light Sport.

The Dealer Assist program at Greg's was an excellent experience, not only did I get a great airplane but an extended family as well. Being able to live just feet away from the build area was unbelievable. My thanks to Greg and Crystal for their hospitality and Dan and Gary and Kathy and Kara.



All clean and ready to go to Omaha, Thanks Crystal and Kathy! 5/23/14

This past June I flew to Connecticut, and Virginia to visit my daughters and family. I had some 30 plus hours flying time and another great adventure. It took 5 days to get to Connecticut and 4 days to return from Virginia because of weather. Where ever I stopped the "Stars & Stripes" got a lot of attention. Needless to say the Lightning was perfect and efficient, averaging 4.8 gph.



**13,000 ft., 124 GS and a 30 mph cross wind!
The OIT alarm was a loose wire on the temp sender. 5/29/2014**

Rick's Jet is Serial Number 146 and now has 185 hours on it. More Pictures on the next page.



Over Long Island Sound. 6/10/2015



Over Long Island Sound. Groton Sub Base in the background. 6/10/2015



Shortly after arriving in Meriden CT (KMMK) where I learned to fly. 6/6/2015

Sun-N-Fun - 2016

Article by Dennis W. Wilt



This year, the weather was excellent. It wasn't too hot and we only had rain on Thursday morning. I thought the attendance was down from last year, but that could just be me. We had pretty good traffic at the booth.



This picture is off my left wing as I was flying to Lakeland on Monday morning the 4th of April. There was a bit of weather out there to the South and West. The next picture is the display as I was cruising at just over 2500 ft. on the way to Lakeland. True Airspeed was 120 knots, 2790RPM and 5.0 GPH. I need to put a trim tab on my rudder. I always need a little right rudder in cruise and when I took the picture, I was obviously focusing on taking the picture and not my rudder control.



Greg and Crystal from Lighting Aircraft West sponsored the booth for the factory and their operation in Arizona. I flew my Jet there for a plane to be on display. Crystal did a great job as always keeping my Lightning clean and pretty for the show. Greg, designed a nice display for our smaller 30 ft. by 20 ft. space out in front of Hangars A and B. Buz Rich was there to help out and it is always nice to talk with Buz. No matter what we discuss, I learn something.

Although I did not get to walk the whole show, a really good friend of mine took some excellent pictures and then there is the web, so pictures of the event are not a problem. You will see some good pictures later in the article.

Max and Olena's new son, Victor Alexander. They have a beautiful family.



The picture above is the booth we had for Sun-N-Fun. Next year, it would be nice to have the two spaces on the end of this row. This year BD had the end booth and was showing their BD-4 aircraft. The BD folks were extremely helpful when it was time for me to leave on Sunday evening. They took down their tent and moved a bunch of display stuff so I could get out of the space.

I don't know if we actually sold any kits while we were there, but there was a lot of interest. A few people came back several times. You never know.

Donna had the Society of Aviation and Flight Instructor's (SAFE) booth inside Hangar A, so it was a short walk for me to help out with both organizations. I am a member of SAFE and have volunteered at their booth at Sun-N-Fun and AirVenture. My favorite time though, is talking to prospective customers at the Lighting exhibit. Below is a picture of me looking official. Thanks to Greg for buying me a couple of Lightning shirts and hats. I was not wearing the new Lightning hat in this picture because it has a mesh back and my bald head got sun burned the day before.



The next picture is Max Voronin and Olena Manakina's daughter. Max used to be a Lightning dealer in Deland, FL. Max is now flying commercially. Their daughter had a really nice time flying Dusty, but very soon, she wanted to get into a real airplane and go fly. She will likely be a pilot one day. We also got to meet



The large exhibit hangars seemed pretty busy most days, but out on the grounds, it seemed to be fairly light in attendance. The picture below shows how light it was. This was on Wednesday, I think.



The picture below is from the booth that was selling Corvair engine modifications. I had to share a picture of the coffee warmer.



The few pages are pictures from the show. As always, Sun-N-Fun is nice to attend. There is always something cool to see.



Sun-N-Fun from the Air



The F-22



Warbirds



and

Airshows



Shiny!!



Buz Enjoyed Talking to these Guys

The F-35 was on display beginning on Thursday. It flew in on Thursday morning and made a couple of passes. For a small fighter (small for today's standards) it makes a lot of noise. I was able to get a few pictures from friends and the Sun-N-Fun web site. But I did not find any of it during the fly by.



The Lightning 2: F-35



You Never Know What You Are Going to See



Pretty Lancair – Got Money?



The Aero-Shell Noise Makers



How About a Little Red Bull Air Racing?

There was plenty to see and do at Sun-N-Fun 2016. Hope to see you at Sun-N-Fun next year.

News from the Factory

The factory is really busy. The guys didn't even have time to get to Sun-N-Fun and we surely missed Nick and Mark. They were finishing up a customer's Lightning XS and it should be a very impressive jet. (pictures below). I don't have the final pictures, but it sure looks pretty from these photos.



Superior XP IO-320 – 160hp



Finishing the Cockpit

Shown above is the engine installation with the new exhaust from Vetterman Exhaust. Arion Aircraft sent a firewall and engine mount to Vetterman and they can now build a stainless exhaust system for any Lycoming engine on the front of a Lightning XS. That is really great for our builders. The engine will be turning a Whirlwind Aviation Constant Speed Propeller.



Almost Finished



A Complete Garmin Panel

Just before publication, N508Z the 3rd customer built Lightning XS made it first flight. The 45min flight went very well, power is a good match on this 165hp ship with the Whirlwind CS prop.



Sun Flyer Solar-Electric Prototype Delivered

For those of you wondering what has been going on with the Electric Lightning, the article is below. The new airplane called the Sun Flyer has been delivered and Aero Electric Aircraft Corp is in the process of working on the power plant and battery installation. I can't wait for pictures of it flying.

March 3, 2016 - The two-seat proof of concept prototype for the Sun Flyer solar-electric flight trainer has arrived at its home station at Centennial Airport near Denver. Aircraft final integration and assembly began immediately.

The aircraft, being developed by Aero Electric Aircraft Corp. (AEAC), is intended to be the first FAA-certified, U.S.-sponsored, practical, all-electric airplane serving the flight training market. After the airplane's electronics systems, flight instruments and electric power plant are installed, ground and taxi tests will begin. The company announced that an aircraft roll-out event will be scheduled soon.



The Sun Flyer proof of concept prototype at its home station at Centennial Airport near Denver

George Bye, CEO of AEAC, thanked the engineering, operations, and support team for their hard work that played an instrumental role in getting the aircraft completed. "This is a major milestone in the Sun Flyer program," he said. "I want to extend my thanks to our board of directors, strategic advisors, shareholders, and industry colleagues who have supported our effort."

AEAC contracted with Arion Aircraft from the Nashville, Tennessee area to help build the initial proof of concept prototype. "The quality of workmanship, fit and finish is extraordinary," said COO Kerry Beresford. "Well done to Nick Otterback and his team at Arion."

Bye said the Sun Flyer innovatively uses broadband and iPad connectivity as part of an entire high-tech flight training system to enhance the student pilot-instructor experience. "In fact, we have an iPad in the proof of concept prototype, as well as Redbird Flight Simulations' Sidekick," he said. The new Redbird "Sidekick" keeps track of motor parameters, as well as flight time, airplane position, attitude, and landings, and wirelessly transmits the data to the flight school or ground station where the operator can track it via Redbird's customizable Sidekick software.

"The addition of Sidekick is a collaborative opportunity to further enhance a comprehensive pilot training system for Sun Flyer," said Jerry Gregoire of Redbird.

Bye said the AEAC team has an ambitious but exciting year ahead. "We expect to make significant progress over the next several months in Sun Flyer POC prototype testing and in the ongoing development and refinement of the final production design," he said.

News from The Dealers

From Lightning Aircraft West:

Some people almost become family when you get to know them. Greg and Crystal Hobbs from [Lightning Aircraft West](#) are about as close to family as you can get. They are wonderful folks and they have a really wonderful facility near Marana, AZ. I have never had anything but a good experience working with either Greg or Crystal. They are pleasant, nice people that enjoy others, so if you are going to build a Lightning in the West part of the US, you should very much consider using their facility. Where else will someone put you up and feed you while you build your plane? If you ever spend any time at all with them, you will understand what I mean about family.



Jack's Jet During First Taxi

I would bet that Jack's Hokie Jet has flown by now, although there aren't any pictures of it in the air on the Lightning West blog. These picture show great attention to detail for a one of a kind paint job and airplane. Isn't it pretty?



From This



to

This



From First Start



to

Taxi

Greg and Crystal have begun hosting EAA Chapter meetings at their place and as you can see, it has been a huge success.



Greg Giving a Talk



Crystal Served a Fajita Lunch



And Off They Go



Current Lightning Dealers or Representatives



Arion Lightning, LLC, contact Nick Otterback, Shelbyville, TN, 931-680-1781, www.flylightning.net



Southwest: Geronimo Experimental Aircraft, Greg Hobbs, 18750 West Avra Valley Rd, Marana, AZ 85635, 520-405-6868 www.lightningaircraftwest.net



Mid Atlantic: Green Landings Flight Center, Ryan Gross, 309 Takeoff Dr., Hedgesville WV 25427, 304-754-6010, www.greenlandings.com



Upper Midwest: H & S Aviation, Tom Hoffman, 3015 Shady Ln, Neenah, WI 54956-9509, (920)-585-9704



Midwest: Heart of America Aviation LLC, Jack Gonzenbach, 12906 W 122nd St, Overland Park KS, 66213, (913) 890-3052, jgonzenbach@flyhoaa.com



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Sun-N-Fun 2016 in the History Books

News from Builders and Flyers

Gerd's New Jet – The White Lightning

Article by Gerd Nowack



(Editor's Note: Gerd has flown his Jet. Unfortunately, he has had some issues getting his Electric CS Propeller to work correctly. But, we now have a new Lightning flying in Europe. Congratulations to Gerd!!! Below is a write up that he submitted for this edition of Hangar Talk.)

My name is Gerd Nowack, and I live in Upper Hessen in central Germany. I spend my days living the serene life of a retired airline pilot with a wife, two grown daughters including one granddaughter, a dog, a Harley and several other hobbies like hunting, fishing, house maintenance, and of course GA flying. Which means I have practically no spare time. Those of you who are also retired will know what I'm talking about.

Some time ago I promised Dennis to write something exclusively for the Newsletter about my Lightning, kit no. 162, D-EGFL, also known as The White Lightning.

Maybe you remember my earlier write-ups about my first Lightning, D-ELIY, that crash landed a little more than 3 years ago and got damaged beyond repair. To those who followed this rather sad story: the good news – besides the fact that I could walk away from said landing which makes it per definition a good one –: I won the lawsuit against the insurance company and at least got the invested money back. The Judge even approved of our opinion to refund the building hours so it turned out that I got paid for building my first Lightning.

After recovering from that sad event I found that I still wanted to own my own airplane. I spent some weeks thinking and checking the various options and I felt that I didn't want to let the hard won experience and abilities go to waste, so I decided to build a second, and of course, a better Lightning.

In the meantime, ULPower, the Belgian company that had sold me the engine for my first Baby had developed a 6-cylinder engine, longer but slimmer than the old 4cylinder. And instead of 120hp the new engine offered 160hp! I could convince my OUV (German for EAA) Supervisor that this was a viable engine option since the guys from Arion had decided to build a O320 powered Lightning XS. I also found a nice propeller: a custom built Italian constant speed prop made by GT Propellers. Quite a multinational setup for an American kit plane! It even got Austrian batteries. Czech LED lights! A Canadian fuel gauge! UK fuel selector! German radios and spark plugs! ---- er, sorry, got carried away!

I got started in May 2013, when I spent a week in Shelbyville after the kit had arrived from Wisconsin. We drilled a lot of holes with Arion's drill jigs and, together with Ron, built a plywood crate that was sturdy enough to protect my future Jet on its first - and probably last - transoceanic journey. Mark drove the crate to ATL airport, from which my Lightning took off for the first time. Not on its own wings, though, but in the big belly of a Lufthansa Cargo MD11 jet, thanks to an affordable standby employee discount ticket.

After getting the kit through German Customs - which turned out to be an extremely evil experience, but that alone would fill separate story - I got the crate home on a rented trailer and could get going. I thought. But first my Supervisor had to write a so called First Evaluation and I had to register my project at the LBA (German for FAA). So I spent the first weeks with my kit counting bolts and sorting parts before I could really get started.

You can't just go and build an experimental airplane in Germany! No, sir! You might have heard that German Bureau crazy - er, - cracy, is special, to say the least! But that is also a different story.

I had planned some unique features on my new Lightning, some a real first. For example: I wanted one central stick. I like to fly with my right hand, and I feel that I sit more comfortable. Uli, my wife, thinks so, too! You might already have seen the picture of the modified spar box in an old Newsletter, here you can see the final result. Since the aileron tubes would have been too long for everybody's taste, Nick designed a "walking bar" assembly which was bolted to the front of the main spar in the factory. Now short tubes go from the stick to said walking bars about two feet into the wing and others from walking bars to the aileron bell cranks.

The central stick made two throttles a necessity. I had a "tactical throttle" on the left cabin wall in my first Lightning and I could use the parts in the new one. The copilot's throttle is the usual one, only mounted on the right panel box.



Also a redesigned central pedestal panel was called for. It is mounted to the underside of the panel box – a little recessed for stick clearance – and goes straight down to the cabin floor. All fuel lines, pitot/static tubes, brake lines and all the electrical wires go through a semicircular opening at the bottom.

My Supervisor and the person at the LBA who has the say in technical matters ganged up on me and demanded a (at least partial) mass compensation for my elevator. Both are flutter specialists and could not be convinced by the argument of way more than 100 flying Lightnings with no reported flutter incidents. They were adamant. Sigh! So Nick and I had to go and design a special modified elevator bell crank. It has longer and thicker arms than usual. To these arms I bolted an aluminum arm, (in its previous life a Lightning's horizontal stabilizer spar) positioned offset so it cleared the elevator tube. I bought a 1200g (that's about 2 ½ lbs. for you non-metricals) brass plate at eBay and bolted this to the end of said arm. Now the elevator is almost mass compensated, the rest weight measured at its end is only 100g / (3 ½ oz.). Whatever it is good for, we will see. If it keeps the flutter away, fine!

Another first: Aluminum tanks! In Europe we have automotive fuel that contains up to 10% ethanol, which is fine for the ULPower engines but not at all fine for the composite tanks. You might ask: why doesn't Gerd just buy 10LL?? Answer: The price. Now please sit down first in case you faint: Here 100LL costs 2.30 Euro, which is about \$2.60 Per Liter!! That's 2.60 times 3.8 eq. \$9.88 per gallon. Automotive gas is about half that, \$4.80 per gallon. So you might agree it makes sense to have ethanol resistant tanks. By the way, European automotive fuel has normed properties, it must not be used to get rid of unwanted volatile chemicals by mixing them in. Like some refineries used to do in some countries I could name. Which caused vapor lock. Furthermore, the ULPower engine has a fuel circulating system with return lines. So no vapor lock. Another consequence of ethanol in fuel: the capacitive tank sensors that you guys all have don't work. I had found that out in my first Lightning and I had to cut the wings open and install float type sensors. Of course this time I did it right from the start and mounted VDO float sensors into the wing roots, just at the spot where the others would have been.

Sure you all know what a Frise aileron is, don't you? If not, get down on your knees and bow your head respectfully towards... no, no, not that Arabian city! Towards the underside of your ailerons! You will notice that the hinges are not at the front end but a bit aft and downward. When deflected this makes the frontal part of the ailerons go in the opposite direction, thereby reducing the control forces. Great, huh? By the way, that's what gave some of the WW2 prop fighters tremendous roll rates with un-boosted ailerons. My old Lightning with the 120hp engine and an electrical CS prop gave me



138 KIAS with a 2550 rpm / 25in. Hg power setting. At that speed I found the elevator forces just fine, but the ailerons were way too stiff. When I looked for a way to improve this I found that there is plenty of space between the wing and the aileron front edge for a chord extension. I bought a 25mm (one inch) spruce stick from our brand of Home Depot, machined a groove in it with my standup drill and fixed this with flox and screws to the front end of the ailerons. I filled the gap with flox, sanded it to a good shape, glassed it all over, and I had ailerons with 20mm longer chord and – hopefully! – an enhanced Frise effect. Of course I had asked Nick and my Supervisor first, both approved. I hope it works out like I planned and the ailerons now have lighter control forces at high speeds but still show an unimpaired aerodynamic stability. If not: the original aileron is still underneath, all can be reversed. If you plan to do something like this, contact me

about details. Oh, and on the left aileron there is again an aileron trim tab, driven by a small Ray Allen actuator. This is not a first, I once more copied the design from Lynn's Lightning. And again: Thank you, Lynn!

The cowling has no cheeks like my - IY had. The ULPower 390iS engine is a little wider than the Jabiru. The Italians sold me a built to spec. propeller shaft which is a little longer than usual and has a spacer disc that carries the slip rings needed for the electric current to the prop adjust actuator. Due to these extensions the cowling clears the no.1 cylinder as I had planned, or rather hoped for. Drawback: I found out that there was nothing to cut off from the aft cowling edges, instead I had to put extensions on them, about an inch. Nick sent me some cutoffs, I then epoxied those on. As a result, I probably own the Lightning with the longest nose ever built. Overall length is 20ft 9"!



My instrument panel is kept simple. I had my share of complex cockpits and won't go night or IFR, so is there only basic stuff. The traditional backup instruments are a must, ASI, ALT and compass must work without electrical power. German Rules, period. The rest is a GRT Sport EFIS, radios and lot of switches to tame the electrical system. Two DC circuits. Observe the nice blue digital Volt indicators for both busses. The gauge above the prop controller is a FLARM. This is a collision avoidance system that was invented by the Swiss and is getting more and more popular here in Europe. It was originally meant for glider planes. The modern versions can sense and compute other FLARMS, ADS-B and normal Mode C transponders, so you can avoid airliners as well as thermals full of gliders, a not at all rare phenomenon on a summer weekend in Germany!

With all those alterations it took longer to build my second Baby than I thought: 1100hours like the first one, and almost 2,5 years! I finished last fall, then Supervisor and Examiner had to come, check it all, and speak their Judgement.

Last week I finally had all the documents together that are needed to apply for a Permit To Fly at the LBA. If you wonder what this means exactly and if you like long German words: Its Luftfahrtbundesamt, German for Federal Bureau of Aviation. No, they are not armed and they don't kick down our doors to investigate. Not so far. They promised me it will take only a few weeks to check it all and get the paperwork done. So by the time you read this I might hold the Permit in my hands and made my first flight already. (*Editor's Note: Of course we now know that he has flown his Jet.*)

Hope to see many of you at next Open House in SYI!



From Russia with Love



Some pictures from Russia. Did you ever think you would see a Lightning on Skis? Me neither.



A Jet Being Built Down Under

(Editor's Note: The Article below shows what Experimental is all about. Michael has made some personal changes to the plane that makes it all his. I certainly enjoyed looking through his build log. I hope you take some time and do the same.)

Article by Michael Gugl

Hi Dennis,

I'm always very interested in the newsletter / Hangar Talk Magazine and I have read all of them, unfortunately I'm not a big writer and an even a slower builder that's why I have not contributed to your fabulous work so far, sorry.

During my build which is just a little over half way I took lots of ideas and suggestions from other builders and the newsletter to make my Lightning something special, I hope.

Therefore, I guess now is the time to give some back if I can. Most my work so far is on <http://www.mykitlog.com/MichaelGugl> published, which is a very useful site with so many builders, also from other airplanes but especially the Lightning article from Wayne & Mark Patterson which helped me a lot where ever the manual was coming short.

To mention a few little features on my build is the remote canopy lock, looks like a GUN in a box but it's NOT a gun. (Note: Pictures are the remote in its box, close up,

covered with the switch.)

With the remote lock I also included a luggage light, maybe not needed but good if you have a dark hangar! Beside the alumina back stiffener is used as a heat sink.

During the design stage of the cockpit panel, I decided to go with the carbon look beside some other modification to the dashboard. Taking the great idea from Wayne P. about the throttle quadrant I had also to modify the middle console, hence build a new peace which just fit on top of the original.

Dennis please have look on the web and if you find anything else interesting to mention, please use it and pass it on, I'm happy if I can help and give some ideas for somebody else's build, hope it helps.

Regards

Michael Gugl
Lightning 145
From Down Under

(Editor's Note: Michael made some changes that are not seen in many Lightnings. He closed the gap in the flaps on the edges and the underside of the wing and closed the gaps on both edges and the underside of the ailerons. I am sure this will make a difference in speeds. Pictures below are Gap seal with Flaps Down, Flap and Aileron Gap Seals, and the Aileron End Gap Filled.)



Upcoming Events

Vero Beach Air Show – Vero Beach, FL

June 25 – 26, 2016



[Vero Beach Airshow](#)
Airport Identifier - KVRB

AOPA Fly-In – Beaufort, NC

May 20 -21, 2016



[2016 Beaufort-Fly-In](#)
Airport Identifier – KMRH

AirVenture – Oshkosh, WI
July 25 - 31, 2016



[EAA AirVenture 2016](#)
Airport Identifier – KOSH

Lightning Homecoming - Shelbyville, TN
September 24, 2016



Airport Identifier - KSYI

The following is an article from Senior Life Magazine, published March 2016. The article was written because Donna is the Chapter Chair for the Space Port 99's.

Look What the Wilts Built

Article by Mary Brotherton



Donna Wilt, who said she has been interested in airplanes as long as she can remember, didn't hesitate when her husband Dennis suggested they build their own because an amateur-built plane is less expensive to purchase and operate than a certified aircraft like a Piper or Cessna. "The plane we built is an Arion Lightning," she said. "It's a fiberglass plane and comes as a kit with many of the major components pre-made. We built the plane as part of a builder-assist program where the owner goes to the factory and builds the plane at the facility using their tools and their assistance."

Donna and Dennis Wilt built their plane in West Virginia, in about 6 months, from build-start to first flight.

"The registration number of our plane is special. N616DW. All aircraft registered in the U.S. start with N. The 616 is our wedding anniversary, June 16, and DW is both my initials as well as my husband's initials," Donna Wilt said. Although you can't always see it easily, a small number two is included in the tail number.

"The number two implies DW squared," Dennis Wilt said.

The Wilts currently own the Arion Lightning and a Cessna 152 nicknamed the Yellow Bird.

"The Lightning is a sleek little plane that is sporty to fly. I compare it to driving a Mazda Miata," Donna Wilt said. "The Cessna 152 is a venerable trainer for beginning pilots, built in 1978. It's fun and easy to fly."

The Wilts drove more than three hours to work on the plane every day, all day, for a week while they were living in Virginia. (*Editor's Note: We stayed for the entire week each week we worked on the plane.*) When they went home, other things happened. After the first week, the plane was painted. After the couple worked on the airplane another week, other people completed the interior. During the third week, the engine, radios and cockpit electronics were installed, and Dennis returned alone the fourth time.

"School had started and I had to teach," Donna Wilt said. "So he finished it up, had the plane approved by the FAA, and the plane had its maiden flight."

Donna Wilt started as a flight instructor and adjunct faculty member at the Florida Institute of Technology in 1990. The associate professor now teaches aviation-related classes for students who want to be professional pilots and for non-pilots who are studying for aviation careers such as airport managers or safety managers. She holds a transport pilot's license, which means she is qualified to fly for major airlines if she chooses.

She and Dennis own Wilt Aviation Consulting, which manages aviation research projects for universities, provides project or program management services for aviation projects and provides expert witness services for aviation litigation cases.

They both tick off a list of the best things about being a pilot, including how wonderful they feel in the sky on a beautiful day, looking at the landscape and clouds.

Donna, who Dennis calls a "cerebral pilot," likes to master a technical aircraft and fly it precisely, accurately and safely to get the best performance from the aircraft.

"It's the satisfaction of knowing the rules and procedures for operating in the National Airspace System and safely participating in the system along with airlines and other aircraft," she said.

She calls her husband a hands-on pilot because he likes flying aerobatics.

Donna Wilt, who is the chapter chairman of the Spaceport 99s, said, "Flying and owning an aircraft can be expensive and we have to do without in other areas of our life. When my children were young, they said their friends would say 'You must be rich; your family has an airplane.' They would reply, 'No, we're poor because we have an airplane!'

Lightning of the Quarter and Pilot Spotlight

Guidelines and Question

The following questions are to be used for your submittals of the Lightning of the Quarter and Pilot Spotlight articles. Every single Lightning out there deserves to be in the Lightning of the Quarter. Every single pilot has a story to tell. I hope you take some time and used these questions and guidelines to tell your story for the rest of us. Although similar, the stories for a Lightning of the Quarter and the Pilot Spotlight are just a bit different.

Before publishing any story, I will likely make some edits for spelling, punctuation, and clarity. So, with these guidelines, I hope I get a lot of input for future issues of Hangar Talk.

Lightning of the Quarter Questions:

If you are interested in submitting your jet for the Lightning of the Quarter, just use the questions below and submit some nice pictures of your plane. A picture of the panel is also interesting, at least it is to me. Take a look at the prior Lightning of the Quarter articles and use them as guidelines when you put your story together. Your story will be great - they all are.

Questions for Lightning of the Quarter.

1. Do you have an online build log? If so, and would like to share it, provide the URL.
2. Where did you get your interest in aviation and what are your earliest memories of wanting to fly?
3. Does your spouse share your interest and does he/she fly as well?
4. What made you choose the Arion Lightning for your aircraft?
5. Did you build it or buy it?
6. Is it an S-LSA, E-LSA, or E-AB? If it is an experimental, does it meet Light Sport requirements?
7. If you built your plane did you build it at the factory, a dealer, or at home?
8. How was the build process?
9. What type of flying do you do with your jet?
10. Have you flown it to a major fly-in? Which ones?
11. Finally, include some (3 or 4) nice pictures of you and your plane and some captions for each picture.

Pilot Spotlight Questions:

If you would like to be highlighted in the magazine, we do that in a Pilot Spotlight article. Each of us have unique stories about our aviation interests, careers, and/or hobbies. Each story deserves telling and they are all interesting to me.

1. Where are you from? Hometown? Current residence?
2. How did you get started in aviation? When did you begin being interested in flying? Why did you want to become a pilot?
3. What were the circumstances for your first airplane ride? Explain in detail.
4. What was the first plane you flew / soloed?
5. What is your favorite aircraft to fly?
6. Did you have to pay for your flight lessons yourself? If so, how did you do that?
7. Tell about your education. If you have a college degree, where did you go to college? What did you study? Do you have any advanced degrees?
8. Did you work in the aviation industry? If so, what was your occupation? If not, what was your occupation?
9. Did you fly commercially? Explain who you flew for, what aircraft you flew, how long did you fly commercially?
10. Were you in the military? Which service, when, how long? Did you fly in the military?
11. When did you meet your spouse? Was she/he supportive of your flying?
12. Have you owned an airplane before the Lightning? How many? What models? How long have you owned them? Which ones did you like best and why? Worst?
13. Have you ever built an airplane? What model(s)? Why did you choose that / those model(s)?
14. What are your favorite aviation events?
15. Have you attended AirVenture or Sun-N-Fun? How many times?
16. What are your other hobbies? Tell about them in some detail.

Final Thoughts



So, I added another task to my volunteer work this month. I am now the AOPA Airport Service Network Volunteer for Sebastian Municipal Airport (X26). Since I am semi-retired, the work will fit in with my interests and passions for aviation. Hopefully, I can be of some assistance to the airport, the tenants, and the pilots that call X26 their home base. An aerial picture of X26 is shown above.

The new Airport Manager, Scott Baker (and the past ASN Volunteer) recommended me for the position. We both go pretty far back in the local area. Scott knows my background and that I will speak up for the airport and for safety issues on the field. I thank Scott for his recommendation.

I am always a little surprised at the background of people I meet, especially when I find out are they are pilots or have been involved in aviation. There is an older couple just a few houses down that moved into the neighborhood this year. I finally got a chance to talk with them and commented about a piece of yard art they have out front. It is a wooden bi-plane with a wind-blown propeller. Turns out he used to own a little airline flying Aztecs and Beech 18's in the Caribbean. She was a Vice President at Virgin Atlantic (evidently the first female VP for any airline). How cool is that?

As a matter of fact, our little neighborhood has quite a few pilots, some still fly and some don't. But once a pilot, always a pilot. If you were able to see just to the right of the golf course next to X26 above, you would see my neighborhood. We live close enough that it is almost an airport community, but we don't have to pay to maintain the airport.

The next trip for N616DW will likely be to the Lightning Homecoming. I will get there a day or two early and leave when the weather allows after the event is over. I hope to see a lot of you there this year. If I don't see you in Shelbyville, maybe at Oshkosh. I will be there, just not flying my jet to OSH.

Blue Skies,
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