

Arion Lightning Newsletter

Volume 4, Number 2
February, 2011



Here is the first Australia-bound SLSA Lightning, currently under construction at Shelbyville. It will be delivered to Lightning dealer Dennis Borchardt.

Contents

Introduction, p. 3

Thanking Buz Rich, pp. 4-8

Carl and Pat Beatrice, "Hat Off To Buz"

Linda Mathias, "Tribute to Buz"

Paul "Bear" Bryant, "Thanks to Buz"

Tips, Tricks, Enhancements, and Best Practices, pp. 9-14

Pete Krotje, "Fuel Tank Sealants"

Nick Otterback, "Nose Fork Upgrade"

Bill Strahan, "Removable Stick Option"

Bill Browns, "Anti-Shimmy Springs"

Flying Reports and Safety Tips, pp. 14-17

Selwyn Ellis, "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous"

Carl and Pat Beatrice on introducing a young man to flying and the
Lightning

News from Shelbyville and the Regional Lightning Dealers, pp. 17-19

Factory News

Contact Information

Classifieds, p. 19

Lightning Rod, pp. 19-20

Searchable Newsletter

Instrument Panels

Building and Flying Videos

March Issue Preview, p. 20

Introduction

Greetings from the Frozen North, 67 nautical miles southwest of Oshkosh, in Middleton, Wisconsin. I am John Jenkins, apparently the only person to volunteer to take over the Arion Lightning Newsletter from Buz Rich, its founder and long-time editor/publisher.

I'm a retired historian and editor with a few books to my credit, including The Howard Morey Story: A Saga of Wisconsin Aviation, which my wife Marilyn and I published in 2005. More importantly to this assignment, I built and fly an Esqual and am in the early stages of constructing an Arion Lightning in my hangar at KC29.

I know from personal experience how important the newsletter has been to nurturing the Lightning community, and felt a strong obligation to try to keep it going, with Buz's example as my inspiration.

Two key points are crucial for us all to keep in mind: First, the Arion Lightning Newsletter always has been and will remain an independent publication. Buz practiced this commitment and Nick Otterback, recently affirmed it: "I like to keep it out of house, so to speak. I would rather it be put together by a builder or someone not on the clock from us. This way you can publish what you like and it's an honest, unbiased bit of information." Enough said on this point.

Second, the Lightning community is small yet diverse and enthusiastic. Its members include builders, flyers, potential builders and flyers, and, yes, company owners, employees, suppliers, and dealers. To do its job properly, the newsletter must serve as a "conduit" of information and ideas to support the overall enterprise. And my job as editor/publisher will largely be, as Nick said, to "put together" what the community provides. In other words, with this publication, you definitely will get what you pay for.

So please, please get involved! Write something about flying your Lightning or building it. And be sure to illustrate with photos—lots of photos. If you are considering the purchase of a Lightning kit or a flying "jet," let your wants and needs be known. If you have ideas about new directions for the newsletter or old ones that should be improved or abandoned, pass them along, too.

Blue skies,

*John Jenkins
Esqual N329SB
Lightning kit 112
john.jenkins@chorus.net*

Thanking Buz Rich

Most of us discover when we retire that we were not indispensable in our jobs. As the three tributes below indicate, however, this probably will not be Buz's fate as he steps away from editing and publishing the Lightning Newsletter. He brought a unique combination of aviation expertise and experience, ability to communicate the right things in the right ways, and a personality that welcomed all comers, from seasoned military aviators to the greenest of potential pilots. And the good news is that he intends to continue contributing to the newsletter and otherwise remaining an active and enthusiastic member of the Lightning community. Thank you, Buz!

HAT OFF TO BUZ Carl and Pat Beatrice

You have spread so very much useful data and information through the Newsletter over the past 3 years. You are a tremendous asset to aviation in general, the wonderful folks at Arion, and to all of us Lightning owners and potential owners.

You have a vast background in aviation and you have passed much of your experience on through the Newsletter.

In reading your Newsletters, it's as if you speak from your heart and to each one of us individually. I know you're instrumental in many people choosing the Lightning, including myself. You played a major part in my choosing the Lightning over the almost 90 other LSA's available in 2008.

I'm glad that John Jenkins has stepped forward to get the monthly Newsletter out. I've considered it but I know I couldn't do near as good a job as you have. You've touched just about everyone over the three year period with your great no nonsense Newsletter. Plus you always found time to answer people's personal questions.

My hat is off to you, Buz. It's a sincere and great pleasure to know you. We wish you all the very best in your exciting new venture.

May the wind always be on your back. God Bless.

* * * * *

TRIBUTE TO BUZ Linda Mathias



Buz helping Linda install wheel fairings.

I am the luckiest Lightning owner/builder in the world because I live near Buz Rich and am the recipient of his generosity and great knowledge. Not only did he convince me to build the Lightning, he helped with the build in Shelbyville and did the test flights when it was finished.

Buz is available for help and advice whenever I need it. He helped me work through CHT and EGT cooling problems and even kept the plane limbered up when I had foot surgery in 2008, and was unable to fly for six weeks. Buz helped fit my first pair of wheel fairings and has offered to help with the second set when I finally get around to it (I am waiting for warmer weather before we have to lie down on the cold hangar floor).

For the past year, I have been even more fortunate because I was able to rent the T-hangar which shares a rear wall with his hangar at the Franklin, VA airport. This allows me to borrow tools and equipment I might need as well as having Buz' assistance on the spot.

I can also vouch for many other pilots and non-Lightning airplane owners in the area who rely on Buz for his expertise and his willingness to share his knowledge with anyone who asks.

We also share the pleasure of Cub ownership; Joe and I had a great trip five years ago when Buz led a convoy of Cubs from Virginia to Florida for Sun 'n' Fun; he did the planning for the trip and made all the necessary arrangements. It took us two days to get there but the adventure was all the more fun because Buz was the leader.

I can truly say that Buz Rich is solely responsible for my building a Lightning; I suspect that several others can make the same claim. MANY THANKS FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND HELP, BUZ!!



Buz with Linda and Joe's Lightning.

* * * * *

THANKS TO BUZ Paul "Bear" Bryant

I want to say thanks for all Buz has done for aviation and particularly the Lightning community. I met Buz through a mutual friend of mine that I knew in the Air Force-Steve Solomon (Sandman) at one of the many Sun-'n-Fun events. I had been thinking of perhaps starting a homebuilt project. That kind of thinking usually happens after several years of attending shows like Sun-'n-Fun and AirVenture. Sandman had his eyes set on building an RV and I was just along for the ride. I enjoyed looking at all the homebuilts on the flight line at Sun-'n-Fun, but never really thought I could afford one and didn't think I had the technical savvy to build one either. So, I just kept the dream inside hoping one day it just might happen . . . then after attending one of those EAA workshops on riveting, I knew immediately working with metal was not going to be my forte. So I began to wonder if I did start a project and it couldn't be metal, was there something else out there I could possibly build? At first, I saw the Inverted-V-Tail and

fell in love with it—even got my name on the list, but they were just in the beginning stages and still looking for financial backing. So I continued to dream . . .

Then one day at Sun-‘n-Fun, Sandman, Buz and I were walking along the main drive of Sun-‘n-Fun we came upon the Lightning booth. Buz had seen the plane before and spoken in depth to the Shelbyville folks and really thought this to be a great airplane and if he were going to build a composite this would be the one. I had kept this discussion in my head for at least a couple of years thinking that if I really do begin a project that will be the one. Buz probably doesn't remember that short passing-by discussion we all had, but the plane was impressive, the cost was very reasonable, and hey, when an Air Force guy like Buz tells you something ya just got to listen—even if he tells it with a little swagger!

I believe the next year, Buz sold his Bonanza and got the Esqual LS (Lightning Stuff) and started a strong friendship with the Shelbyville folks. When we met that next year at Sun-‘n-Fun we talked a little more about the "jet" as he calls it and that piqued my curiosity even more. Based on Buz's input and the fact that I just loved the style and characteristics of the Lightning, I stopped in at their booth and got a nice one-on-one with Nick.

Now, sure the kit is beautiful; Buz lit the fuse; Nick added the fuel, but what was the real decision point to go ahead with the build? Certainly going to AirVenture for the first time in one's life will surely help, but a lot of things can happen over a nice tall glass of brew after a long hot day at AirVenture. So much so, that Sandman got me and two other Air Force Buddies to sign a contract (on a napkin mind you) that whoever started a build the others would also have to do likewise. Another beer or two later . . . what the heck let me sign the napkin.

So the story goes, Sandman ordered his RV-9 kit the very next Sun-‘n-Fun and immediately wanted to know when the rest of us would do likewise. Oh yes, he produced the beer stained napkin with all our signatures; one guy inherited money and BOUGHT a plane; check him off; the other one I believe bought a nearly completed RV-6; check him off. So here I am the last guy out and the email traffic continued for months asking when I was going to start my build . . .

Enter the first annual Factory Sponsored Lightning Fly-in at Shelbyville, TN. I talked a friend of mine who owns a Centurion to fly us up there for the weekend. I would be able to talk not only to the factory technicians, but other Lightning builders and get first hand info. It was a great trip and who is the first guy I run into—Buz. We had another great discussion, got into a lot of the aircraft's capabilities and went for a demo ride with him. That demo (it was a great ride Buz), the warmth of the factory personnel and other Lightning builders who were there, was certainly key to my final decision to build the Lightning.



Buz at the 2010 Shelbyville Fly-in.

Most impressive though in the last four years, Buz has been involved in so many facets of the Lightning community it is truly remarkable! You see him everywhere volunteering to help where he can. I think one of the nicest legacies will be this news letter he began three years ago. I'm certain it had a huge impact on a lot of folks and their decisions to build the Lightning. I'm glad I made the decision and I'm glad I met Buz.

He truly has given us quite an extraordinary amount of time and effort and I personally thank him for it. After all, without him I'd probably still be hounded by Sandman asking when am I going to start my build.

And about Sandman? He is **STILL** building his RV-9 and I've been flying my Jet now for over two years!!!!

Go Lightning and Buz . . . Blue Skies back to you!

Tips, Tricks, Enhancements, and Best Practices

On January 12, 2011, Pete Krotje published an important report in the Matronics Jabiru Engine email list. It is a progress report on the research Jabiru USA has done on the question of fuel tank sealants as regards the various types of fuel in use today.

FUEL TANK SEALANTS

Pete Krotje

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This will be long so please bear with me.

The question of solvents in auto gas is a good bit more involved than just ethanol. We've recently had customers with fiberglass tanks and others with poly tanks who have had problems with auto gas even with no ethanol. In some cases, the auto gas has dissolved the tank sealant even though the sealant is supposed to be ethanol resistant. In other cases, the auto gas has reacted with something to form stringy mucus like strands that are quite good at gumming up the carb slide. In two other cases, something in auto gas coated the inside of the engine with a black combustion product that looked much like burned caramelized sugar (coated valves and valve guides resulting in stuck valves). At this point Jabiru USA is unable to pinpoint the cause of the fuel anomalies.

We have been investigating what may cause tank sealants to dissolve and have been surprised at what we have found. Anyone can find the same info if you dig hard enough and pursue the initial Google findings. A week spent digging and following various leads will result in dozens of reports on auto gas quality issues. We have seen reports detailing contaminants in fuel found in the Detroit area that included ethanol, methanol, MEK, acetone, toluene, TAME and MTBE. Tank sealants are not designed to stand up to many of those contaminants.

Additionally, many tank sealants are labeled as resistant to 10% or 15% ethanol concentrations. If the gas/ethanol mix remains blended, the concentrations may stay below those limits. However, when some condensation enters the tank the resulting moisture combines with ethanol very readily (ethanol will combine with water much faster or more easily than with gasoline). At some point the water/ethanol mixture becomes heavier than gas and sinks to the bottom of the tank where it may remain with the ethanol concentration higher than 15%. This concentration exceeds the tolerance of many tank sealants and can dissolve the sealant. Since aircraft are prone to sitting for longer periods than cars, the ethanol mix at the bottom of the tank can be undisturbed sometimes for weeks or even months at a time while dissolving the sealant.

Again, we are not even close to having many answers but offer these observations on what we've seen from auto gas use over the last 12 years. We really have not been able to come to any solid conclusions other than to think about installing welded aluminum tanks (not an option for many planes).

On the other hand, we've yet to see a tank problem with the sealants we use when the aircraft is flown exclusively on avgas 100LL. It costs a bit more but we view it as cheap insurance for our planes with tanks sealed with any of the commercial sealants out there today.

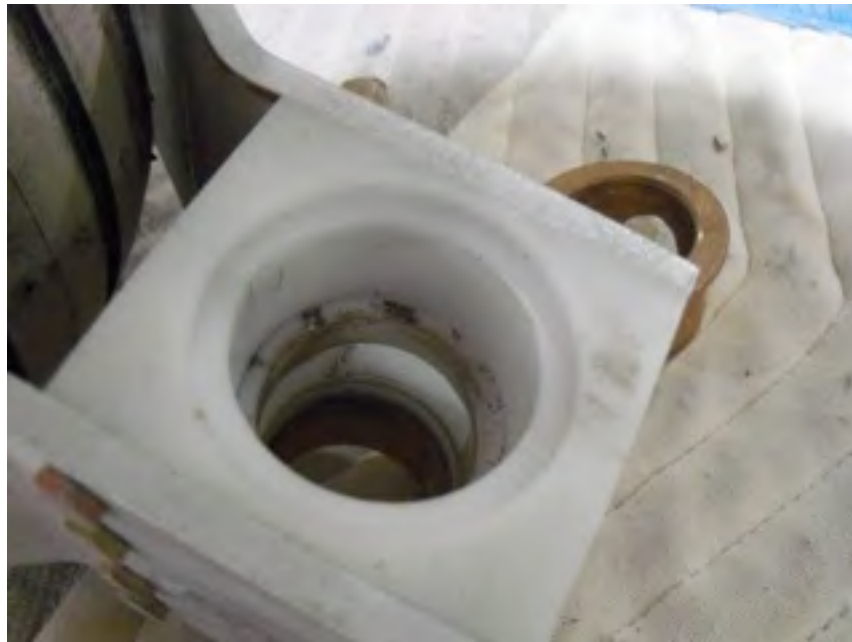
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NOSE FORK UPGRADE

Nick Otterback

Background: Over the past year we have started using bronze bushings in the nose fork assembly. This bushing is inset into a milled phenolic block, which can change shape slightly due to its plastic quality. This sometimes causes the counterbores for the bushings to end up slightly offset, thus putting the bushing in a bind on the gear socket.

If this is the case on your Lightning it will show up as slop at the nose socket pivot point. The fork will feel like it can rock on the pivot shaft along with rotating. By pushing the tail down, the nose will come off the ground, which makes checking easy.



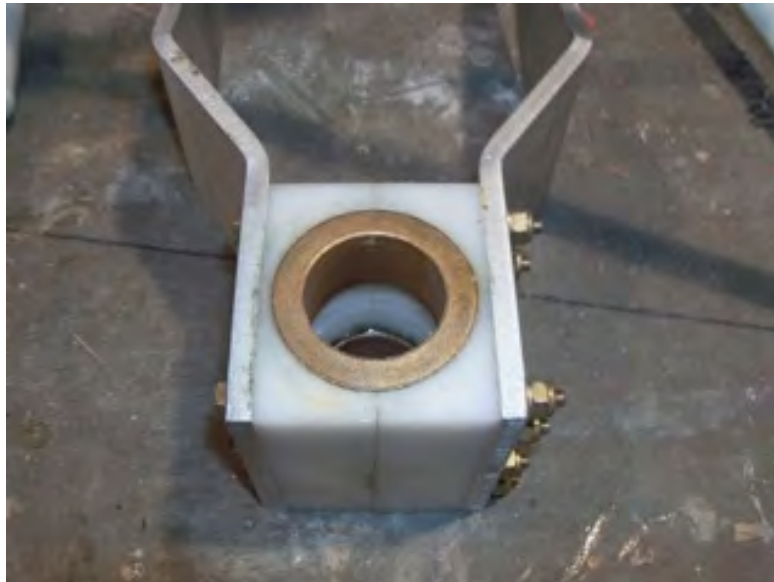
This picture shows counterbore and stop.

Solution: Assemble the forks and nose block as specified in the build manual. Do not install the bushings at this time. Also, make sure the AN3 through-bolts are at the final torque value. The main bore size is 1 3/8", and there is a stop in the bottom that matches the bushing and the inset at the top for the bushing flange.

Use a 1 3/8" hole saw to drill all the way through the nose block, from top to bottom. The saw will bore a few thousandths larger than the bushing, which is what we want. Do this on a drill press, and make sure it is absolutely level.

Next use a drum sander to clearance the upper inset for the bushing flange. It may have fit before, but if the milling is off it won't fit now. Remember to do this for both sides of both bushing blocks. The bushing should now slide freely down into the block.

Use a course drum sander to roughen up the portion of the bushings that will go down into the block. This will provide a good bonding key for the epoxy we will use later.



Note the base of counterbore gone. Bushing fits easily in block.

Mix up a small amount of 24-hour Aeropoxy. Pre-wet the bushings and the block with epoxy only, then coat the bushings with an epoxy/flox mixture to give some body to the mix. Push the bushings down into the block.

Put some moly grease on the nose socket. Slide the assembly down on to the nose fork. This will allow the bushing to self-align while still seated in the block. When the epoxy cures it will "pot" them in place. **Do not torque the AN3 thru bolts further!!!**

The bushings should now be straight, not being pinched by the block and forks when assembled and any slop eliminated.



The assembly is curing on lower socket.

* * * * *

On January 2, 2011, Bill Strahan, in the Matronics Lightning email list, commented on Nick Otterback's "Thoughts on Flying at the Edge of the Envelope," essay published in the same list on December 27, 2010. Besides affirming Nick's analysis, Bill also proposed a removable stick option for the Lightning that led to considerable discussion of that topic. Here is what Bill had to say:

REMOVABLE STICK OPTION

Bill Strahan

Reading this story made me think of a few things. First, on my flight home from SYI, with about 25 hours on the plane, I did something I've done many times in my Grumman. I twisted around, reached in the back, and grabbed my backpack. I pulled it up over the seatback and dropped it into the copilot seat.

Again, it's a motion that felt so familiar. The next few moments were not something with which I was familiar. Everything suddenly stuck to the top of the plane and the view out the front no longer included a horizon—it was all earth! And as rapidly as it happened, it unloaded and I was just pitched down sharply.

I realized that I had dropped the backpack in the seat, and it had simply fallen forward onto the stick. It's a big, heavy backpack that I have my 18" laptop in, and was undoubtedly several pounds of forward stick pressure.

And just like that I realized I had to change some habits. Even if the laptop had hit the yoke in the Grumman, the response would have been a tiny pitch down and I would have pulled the backpack off. In the Lightning it was at least 1g. It was pretty unsettling.

Which brings me to the next comment, I sure would like to see a removable stick option for the copilot side. I've considered pulling the stick out and having a pro welder modify it for me. Just a larger diameter tube to couple the stick, and a pin to slide in place.

For flights with non-pilots who don't want to actually fly I'd pull the pin and put the stick in the back. Most of the time I'd leave it in place, but having the option to remove it might be handy.

Glad all turned out for the pilots mentioned above. In a panic, it's easy to over control. Good thing the check pilot was there. I'm sure that other pilots in similar situations have held the stick back all the way to the ground.

* * * * *

Here is a write-up and photo that resulted from another lively and productive discussion during January, 2011, in the Matronics Lightning email list:

ANTI-SHIMMY SPRINGS

Bill Browns

When I first built my Lightning, I flew the plane for maybe 60 hours before putting on the wheel pants. During that initial 60 hours I never had any shimmy. Almost the first time I taxied the plane after the wheel pants were installed, I felt shimmy. I was really surprised. Since then I have installed new 6-ply tires which were balanced and the brakes have been redone. Better, but still more shimmy that I would like.

Thinking back to the initial 60 hours I got to wondering why I started feeling the shimmy after the wheels pants were installed. I got to wondering if the wheel pants were "magnifying" some harmonics from the gear legs. So I started looking at the way the wheel pants are mounted. The inside mounts are fixed but the outside mount "floats" inside the axle. I'll admit that "floats" may be a little strong but it is certainly not tight. I went to the Farm and Fleet Aviation Department (LOL) and got some 4-inch long compression springs and some large washers, removed the outside wheel pant bracket and installed a washer and spring, pushed the bracket back in place and re-installed the cotter pin to hold everything in place. Now I have a "stiff" mounting point which seems to have helped reduce shimmy—not perfect but better.



Unfortunately, I did not keep the packaging from the springs I bought at Farm and Fleet. I have another set of springs I bought at Ace Hardware marked as 7/8" x 4" x .80 and 24.80 pounds "Safe Working Load." They appear to be almost the same springs.

I think the springs have helped reduce the shimmy. It is a simple fix if you want to give it a try.

Flying Reports and Safety Tips

This New Year's flying report appeared in the Matronics Lightning email list, on January 2, 2011. It comes from Selwyn Ellis, who flies Lightning kit 66 in Australia:

FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS

Selwyn Ellis

Happy New Year to all. To kick the year off I thought I'd share my New Year's Day flying experience which involved a cross country, a spell of glider towing and the return flight.



Reports Selwyn: "The good looking one . . . is my wife Judy."

First the sublime. New Year's Eve was a nasty day with 30kt north westerlies, 42C temperatures and a number of grass fires in the area, but I was relieved to wake up to much cooler conditions on New Year. I rolled my Lightning out of its Horsham hanger at 0830 local, fuelled it up and took off into a much more pleasant 20kt or so of South Westerly. As you would expect with that wind, the initial climb out was bumpy and visibility was poor with smoke haze until I climbed out over the inversion at about 2600 ft. Then the magic began! The inversion stretched dead level from horizon to horizon with the smoke haze trapped under it giving the illusion of a smooth level surface with dark blue hills rising above it in perfectly clear air. I climbed up to 5500, let the Lightning ease into an economical 120kt cruise and relaxed back to drift along above scattered islands in a magical misty lake.

Cruising along in a beautiful aeroplane over a magic landscape, the thought that "I built this" playing around the edges of my mind, 160kt groundspeed on the Voyager panel, bliss! To make it better, judging by the absence of radio traffic, I was the only one up there.

All too soon the control area steps around Melbourne were looming up and it was time to descend through the scattered Cu sitting on the inversion into the bumps to land at Bacchus Marsh roll up to the gliding club hanger and switch off the trusty Jabiru. That was 125nm, 50 minutes chock to chock, 221 avgas, views only I saw. Beats driving any day.

Then to the ridiculous. Well, perhaps ridiculous is a bit harsh, but towing in a Pawnee is certainly a different take on aviation. For those who don't know it the PA25 Pawnee is a tube and fabric tail dragger with an O-540 Lycoming which started life as a crop duster. It is almost totally without frills but it excels at the task of dragging sailplanes to two or three thousand feet and getting back to the ground in minimum time. Six minutes or so to two thousand and back. Flying it is a total contrast to the Lightning.

Ease the tow rope tight then apply full power, the clattering and bellowing from the huge chunk of iron up front batters at the headphones, concentrate on keeping it straight and ease into the air, the guy on behind is not keeping station so often some coarse control inputs are required to maintain the nose where I want it, a quick check of airspeed, keep the eyes out of the cockpit, fly attitude, look around, some days there are twenty or thirty sailplanes and another couple of tugs up here!

About this point, I become conscious of discomfort in my right leg, there is no rudder trim and 250 HP, fine pitch prop in full power climb requires a significant amount of effort to keep the ball in the middle, Pawnee leg is an occupational hazard. About the time discomfort slides into ache the sailplane releases the tow, power back, descending left turn to gain space, cowl flaps closed, speed to 105, revs to 2300, look after the engine, eyes outside, plan descent and circuit, aim to arrive somewhere near base turn without breaking descent then power back, checks, slow to 65, glide approach, gentle three pointer, roll in front of the next sailplane and repeat. To do all that twenty times in a session is a significant task, to do it well each time is a real challenge.

There are clear differences in the mechanics of flying the two aircraft, if you tried to apply those control inputs to a Lightning you would have done a couple of loops and several flick rolls. On the other hand the skills are the same, look out, fly attitude, plan climb descent and circuit paths, look out, airspeed control, land at minimum speed on your chosen spot.



One of the tows I did was for a father taking his son on the lad's first flight. The lad came back with that special excited grin on his face and took the trouble to come over and thank the tuggy and have his picture taken in front of the Pawnee, a special moment.

The flight back home was more usual, staying low in the bumps to minimize the headwind, but we still managed a respectable 110kt over the ground and decent arrival back at Horsham.

What a great start to 2011. I hope you have a great one as well.

* * * * *

Finally, here is a short, untitled report from Carl and Pat Beatrice about a recent flight that introduced a young man to flying and the Lightning:

Buz has always advocated taking someone along for a flight. I guess in my over 50 years of flying I've introduced more than a few people, both old and young and in between to flying.

Let me relate a recent flying experience with my 11 year old grandson. In early December, 2010, Sean indicated that he'd like to go flying. He had never flown in a light aircraft. I jumped at this opportunity, and on a clear, cool December day he and I went flying.

After takeoff in early climb, I turned the aircraft over to him, I explained how to maintain climb by visual outside reference and right rudder. He then did climbing turns and leveled the aircraft. From there he did medium and steep bank turns (45 degrees). Then I showed him a few stalls. I must say I was impressed by his smoothness in handling the aircraft and how well he retained what I told him.

Not too long after, Sean and I went for another flight. This time he followed me through on takeoff, then took over in the climb to level flight followed by medium and steep turns, slow flight, stalls (which he liked) descents, descending turns to traffic pattern, then followed me through on the landing. He did an outstanding job of handling the airplane. Very smooth and pretty precise. I hope he continues his interest in flying.

News from Shelbyville and the Regional Lightning Dealers

Factory News



Several Lightnings in progress, including two ready for paint, one under construction, and one nearly finished.



Here is a fun picture, also of potential interest to homebuilders. The wings are installed with the fuselage upright and then it is flipped upside-down to accommodate work on the ailerons and flaps, rudder pedal assembly, firewall, gear legs, and almost everything else.

Contact Information

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

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Classifieds

Here is another excellent suggestion submitted by a Lightning builder:

“Have a classified section where owners or dealers can list items for sale that relate to the Lightning, or a whole jet if one needs to sell. Some dealers have developed sub-kits to deal with trims etc., or have procured other helpful materials that they can offer to the Lightning owners.”

Lightning Rod

***Searchable Newsletter:** This section contained reader “feedback” on prior Lightning Newsletters and suggestions for improvements and innovations. One idea recently surfaced that called for making the newsletter fully searchable, from the first issue to the present. This definitely is a worthwhile thing to do, but some technical advice will be needed to make it happen. Surely some of our readers can provide that assistance!*

***Instrument Panels:** Lightning builder Bernardo Melendez, kit #110, submitted this excellent idea. If readers follow up, expect a series of reports in the Tips, Tricks, Enhancements, and Best Practices section: “One suggestion that I'd like to make is that you request from owners of flying Lightnings and Esquals photos and data about their instrument panels, how they are equipped, and their thoughts or suggestions on instrumentation choices. That should fill a substantial portion of several newsletters and will give those of us that have not filled the panels yet food for thought for when we get to that stage in our projects.”*

***Building and Flying Videos:** A third suggestion proposed that the newsletter organize a place on the web where videos involving Lightning airplanes—under construction and in the air—could be made available for all to see and enjoy. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this editor, **but** running a continuing section in the newsletter listing videos wherever they might be posted would be easy to do and provide for almost as easy*

access. To demonstrate the virtue of this approach, please click on and view this excellent video featuring Bear Bryant and his N82PB jet:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJpxZ2LRIGs>

March Issue Preview

A Report by Mark Stauffer on the
January, 2011, Sebring Light Sport Expo

