

Skyraider Sentinel

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Skyraider Aviation Welcomes New Club Members!

- Ed Babovec
- Mike Broom
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This Month in Aviation History



January 11, 1935 – On this date Amelia Earhart made the first solo flight by a woman, from Hawaii to California. She made the 2,408 mile trip in her Lockheed Vega NR 965-Y. This was also the first flight where a civilian aircraft carried a two-way radio. After her flight she described her experience, writing, "After midnight the moon set and I was alone with the stars. I have often said that the lure of flying is the lure of beauty, and I need no other flights to convince me that the reason flyers fly, whether they know it or not, is the aesthetic appeal of flying."

"The exhilaration of flying is too keen, the pleasure too great, for it to be neglected as a sport."

— Orville Wright

First Solo

Now that our flying club has been up and running for about 2 months, many of you are probably starting to think about that great milestone of aviation... the first solo! No doubt many are looking forward to this event with nervous anticipation.

I remember my first time like it was yesterday. The date was May 7th, 2001. My instructor did me the disservice of telling me ahead of time that "tomorrow was the day". Needless to say I didn't

sleep too well that night, and it was with numerous butterflies in my stomach that I drove to the airport the next morning. My instructor and I did several touch-and-goes before he announced to ATC that our next landing would be to a full stop. We landed N67RA and taxied back to the FBO where my instructor hopped out. Suddenly I was on my own! Strangely though, all the nervousness, all the butterflies disappeared as I suddenly realized... "Hey, I know how to do this." I then proceeded to

perform 3 of the best takeoffs and landings of my fledgling aviation career.

Remember: Before you can complete your first solo flight, you'll need to do the following:

- Get a student sport pilot certificate (available from the FAA, a DPE, or AME)
- Complete all club paperwork
- Complete pre-solo written exam.

Fit to Fly

So you may be wondering why there's a fitness article in our club newsletter – after all, what does hitting the gym have to do with flying? The answer is simple: Just because the FAA does not require a medical certificate for flying as a Sport Pilot, does not mean we can ignore our health and fitness. While the act of sitting in the cockpit working the stick and rudder admittedly does

not require much physical ability, there is a great deal associated with flying that does require us as pilots to maintain a level of health and fitness greater than our earth-bound neighbors. From pulling the airplane from the hangar, to climbing on board, to dealing with emergencies; there are many aspects of flying that can benefit from better fitness.

It is for this reason that we have decided to launch our "Fit to Fly" campaign. This initiative will seek to encourage our club members to become healthier and thereby safer pilots. As part of this campaign, we have teamed with the health club "Fitness 19" to make gym access more affordable. Fitness 19 has several locations throughout Colorado,

including one just a few miles from the airport. It offers a relaxed, non-intimidating, family-oriented setting with lots of modern, well-maintained equipment suitable for anyone from beginners to fitness gurus.

The goal of the *Fit to Fly* campaign is not to create a bunch of muscle-bound supermodel Skyraiders, but rather just to make modest improvements in the strength, flexibility, weight, and overall health and fitness of our club

members.

Check out future issues of the Skyraider Sentinel for more articles discussing health and fitness as they relate to flying.

Kerrville to Denver in an Evektor SportStar

By Dennis Moss

Day One

I was the Airport Manager of the Erie Municipal Airport from 2001 to 2007. During that time I had entertained several individuals that proposed startup aviation enterprises and service companies at the airport. Proposals ranged from a helicopter aerial tanker / fire fighting company that wanted to base at the airport, to an individual that wanted to begin construction and sales of ½ scale Mig 15 fighters. In most cases, all that was missing in the proposals was a business plan, startup capital, aircraft, trained pilots, and a realistic idea. Other than that, the ideas all sounded relatively feasible and profitable. Well, maybe not the ½ scale Mig.

So, you can imagine that when Chris Dillis walked into my rather shabby airport manager's office (the Town of Erie doesn't like to spend too much on the airport) and wanted to know what it would take to start a flight school at Erie I was somewhat skeptical.

However, it didn't take long to figure out that this was a flight school of a different nature. For starters, Chris wanted to concentrate on the relatively new Sport Pilot certificate. He had already put money down on an aircraft, had a good business plan, and the financial support needed, all he was looking for was someplace that is a little more friendly – and a lot less expensive than Centennial Airport. It didn't take long to come to the conclusion that Skyraider Aviation and the Erie Municipal Airport were made for each other.

The idea of starting a flight school based on Sport Pilot was one that I had thought about myself several times, because I'm in love with the idea of Sport Pilot. I've got most of the ratings, and I've flown some fairly expensive airplanes, but the airplanes that I really love are all on the lighter end of aviation. I'll walk past a long row of brand new \$250,000 Cessna's to look at a \$10,000

homebuilt. I was Sport Pilot before Sport Pilot was cool. In the late 80's and early 90's I owned a Taylorcraft BC-65, a two-seat antique tail-dragger with a 65 horse Continental engine, no electrical system (you had to hand prop it) that cruised at 80 mph. I flew it for 300 hours over most of the real estate between the Rockies and the Mississippi River.

Since you don't need a medical to fly Sport Pilot, I let my medical expire in July of 2004. September 1, 2004 - the first day of the new Sport Pilot rule – found me flying back from Eureka KS in a Stitts Playboy, a single seat, low wing open cockpit homebuilt from the 1960's. I own two homebuilt light sport planes, and teach in gliders as well as power planes, so I guess you could say I'm fairly smitten with this end of aviation.

Anyway, it was apparent that Chris was the real deal, and he would soon need contract flight instructors for his new

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business. I'm a flight instructor whose grown-up job would soon be coming to an end. Serendipity. Thus came the offer to accompany Chris to Kerrville TX to pick up the new SportStar when it arrived in July. I mean September. Ummm...October? Well, definitely November. November 2nd to be exact. Or maybe November 9th. Yep, when the word came down that the aircraft was actually in Texas and ready to be picked up on the 9th; everything really started to come together. Chris made reservations on Frontier, and we flew out to San Antonio on the evening of the 8th and were met by Jeff Conrad, President of Evektor America. Jeff drove us the 60 miles to Kerrville, introduced us to his beautiful wife and treated us to dinner and conversation at a gen-you-wine Texas steak house. It doesn't get much better than that.

The next day dawned with low ceilings and 3 miles visibility, but when Jeff picked us up at the hotel at 8:00, he said that it was just moisture blown in from the Gulf and would dissipate around noon. FSS confirmed this opinion, and we headed to the airport to

see Chris' new plane.

I'd seen pictures of the SportStar in the magazines, and had seen the demonstrator at the EAA Rocky Mountain Regional Fly-in in June of 2006, but when we walked into the hangar at Kerrville and saw the BRAND NEW! airplane sitting in the middle of the hangar, it was probably one of the cutest airplanes I had ever laid eyes on. Chris started walking around the plane looking like a ten year old that has just found a Red Rider BB gun under the Christmas tree. Jeff walked us around the plane for about a half hour and explained some of the unique features and characteristics that this aircraft has. As Chris was getting the paperwork squared away, I checked with FSS to see if they still thought that it would be flyable by noon. As it turned out, Chris was able to go up around 10:00 for his check out, and I checked out in the plane at 11:00. Man, what a cool plane! It's the first factory production plane I've ever flown that has a light, sporty feel to the controls that almost feels like some of the home-builts that I've flown, but without the twitchy, slightly unstable feel that some

of them have. The only plane I've ever flown with better visibility was open cockpit, and that's not nearly as comfortable as the SportStar. And the smell! I could make a million dollars if I could bottle new plane smell. Two million if I could bottle new plane with leather seat smell.

So, at 12:30 PM on November 19, 2006 Chris took full possession of his brand new, fully fueled, fun flying, good looking, nice smelling airplane and we piled in to head north.... and just a little bit west.

Our first fuel stop was going to be Crosbyton, Texas, about 230 miles and a little bit more that 2 hours away. Since Chris is the tech savvy kind of guy, I let him plug the destination onto the GPS, and I followed along with the Sectional Chart.

Here's where I have a confession to make; since I do most of my flying around the Front Range, if there are no mountains around, I get disoriented easily. Even though progress was easy to track on the map, and the GPS made it a piece of cake, my screwed up inner compass kept telling me we were headed east instead of



Brand new SportStar at Evektor America, Kerrville, TX



Evektor America's President, Jeff Conrad (red hat) and Dennis Moss prepare for Dennis's first SportStar flight.

north north west. We climbed above the haze layer into smooth air, set up for cruise at 3000 feet and enjoyed the view. The GPS was telling us we had a tailwind of about 20 mph, and we left the Texas hill country behind at about 135 mph, headed for north Texas.

North Texas looks a lot like the Oklahoma Panhandle. Which looks like western Kansas. Which bears a striking resemblance to eastern Colorado....and western Nebraska. You get the picture, lots and lots of flat farmland without a lot of good checkpoints for navigation. This was the first time I had flown with a GPS moving map display, and I can definitely see how it would be easy to become spoiled, and maybe just a squeak overly dependant on one. It's kind of cool to really know that the clump of trees in the distance really is Spiderbreath TX, or Dismal Seepage, KS. Takes a lot of the guesswork and just a little bit of the fun out of navigation. I've landed at airports and walked out into the parking lot to check which state the license plates are from. Those days are gone now I guess. Anyway, when

Crosbyton hove into view there was little doubt we were in the right place. With a 15 mph crosswind. Chris handled the wind just fine, and we taxied up to the fuel pumps, which looked like they had last seen service in 1941.

Hmmm..well, AOPA's airport guide says they have fuel, so it must be true. I had seen an open hangar on the east end of the airport, with a pickup parked next to it, so I hiked the 300 feet to the east end of the airport. The gentleman working on the crop duster inside appeared genuinely surprised to see me. The Evektor is pretty quiet, and he had Charley Daniels cranked up on the boom box, so it's kind of understandable that he jumped two feet, threw his wrench and made a sound like a parrot being tasered when I tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention. After the dust settled and apologies were made, it was determined that the fuel pumps had indeed been abandoned several years earlier. AOPA take note. A quick check of the sectional chart showed a rather large settlement named Plainview on course to the north, and the GPS database

indicated that fuel was available at the somewhat larger airport. With a wave to our newfound friend we departed Crosbyton headed north. He waved back with a kind of mono-fingered Boy Scout salute – must be a north Texas thing.

Whether it was christened after the landscape, or the aesthetics, Plainview Texas is aptly named. After a minor detour to the Plainview VOR (turns out that when you ask GPS to navigate you to the VOR it actually does so, rather than take you to the airport) we landed uneventfully and taxied in to the FBO. A rather young voice on the radio called on Unicom frequency to inquire if we needed fuel, and requested we taxi to the pump after we answered in the affirmative. After we climbed out and started walking into the FBO building, a pleasant, friendly young man about high school age came out and asked how much fuel we needed. Chris told him to top it off, and stayed with the plane to supervise the refueling. I headed for the bathroom. When I got inside, a young lady of about high school age greeted me. She seemed to be



North Texas landscape

“Whether it was christened after the landscape, or the aesthetics, Plainview Texas is aptly named.”

attempting to re-align the buttons on a hastily buttoned blouse. It occurred to me just why the line guy was in such a good mood. People at north Texas airports seem to have a habit of being surprised when airplanes show up. After pit stops & paying for the fuel, we looked at the chart and figured we could make it to Dalhart, TX before nightfall. We inquired with the young people behind the counter on what activities there were in Dalhart at night. In unison they replied “nothing”. Oh well, if they have a motel room and a restaurant that’s all we need. 3:00 found us leaving Plainview, headed 100 miles north for Dalhart, with a little more than an hour of daylight left.

An hour later we were entering the pattern at Dalhart, and heard something we hadn’t heard or seen all day – traffic. There were two other planes in the pattern, both Cessnas, and everyone was entering the pattern simultaneously. After sorting everything out, we landed on runway 8 as our shadow came up to meet us just as the sun was setting. While we were tying down, the pilots of the other aircraft came over to admire the

SportStar. One of the cool things about the airplane is that it does attract attention on the ramp. After getting fuel and hangar squared away, we shared a ride to the hotel with a retired airline pilot who was going to Arizona in his Cessna 150. I wish I could remember his name, ‘cause he really was a cool guy. After we checked in, we walked to a local steak house and swapped flying stories for a couple of hours over dinner, then walked back to the hotel and agreed to meet downstairs early the next day for the ride to the airport. Seems there was something to do in Dalhart.

Day Two

Well, we didn’t need to get up so early after all. After a quick breakfast and drive to the airport, a check with flight service revealed buckets o’ crap weather-wise between Dalhart and Denver. A front had come through the previous evening and a line of snow showers and low visibility ran from Pueblo to Goodland, KS. It was obvious that we weren’t going anywhere soon, so we bid our new retired airline pilot friend goodbye, and did a quick preflight so we could get away if the

weather cleared.

Uh-oh, the oil was low, and Jeff had forgotten to give us a quart before we left Kerrville. Oh well, how hard can it be to find four-stroke motorcycle oil with gear lube in Dalhart TX? As it turns out, pretty hard – Sort of. Chris got on the phone to the factory to find out if the automotive oil the FBO had was OK. Nope, gotta have gear additive. We got the spec on the oil, and I got on the phone to the local parts houses to see if they had anything like it. Well, ya – in five gallon cans. We drove into town to the Napa store and found what we thought we needed – in quart bottles. Chris called the factory & read them the spec; sure enough this was the stuff. Sighs of relief all around.

Now to find some reading material. Maybe. Books aren’t easy to find in Dalhart, but we managed, and with oil and reading material in hand we headed to the airport to wait out the weather. After lunch at the little airport diner, we checked weather and decided to try for La Junta. The radar returns indicated breaks in the shower activity, and FSS wasn’t quite as

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pessimistic as they had been in the morning. We bid goodbye to our hosts at the FBO and took off into a 30 mph headwind.

Thirty minutes of headwinds and moderate turbulence later we were 40 miles north of Dalhart and facing a solid wall of snow showers. As Monty Python says: "Run away, run away!". We headed back to Dalhart. The GPS went from indicating a ground speed of 70 knots to 140 knots, and we covered the forty miles back to Dalhart in about 15 minutes. Since I have quite a bit of time in high winds, I took the landing, and

the SportStar seemed to stop in mid air, as we turned final into a 30 mph wind. Back to the hangar for the night, & borrow the courtesy truck for the ride back to the motel. If you ever spend the night in Dalhart be sure to bring a good book. The kids in Plainview were right.

Day Three

Up early, and at the airport at 7:00. The weather was beautiful, and the three hours from Dalhart to Erie was an uneventful flight in air as smooth as glass. I love post-frontal flying. The only problem encountered was two cases of "uncomfortable

headset" after about two hours. Erie was calm, and the bird was finally home. If you ever get the chance to pick up a SportStar from Kerrville, let me know if you want company. I'd be happy to do it again.