

Member Spotlight – Mark Edwards

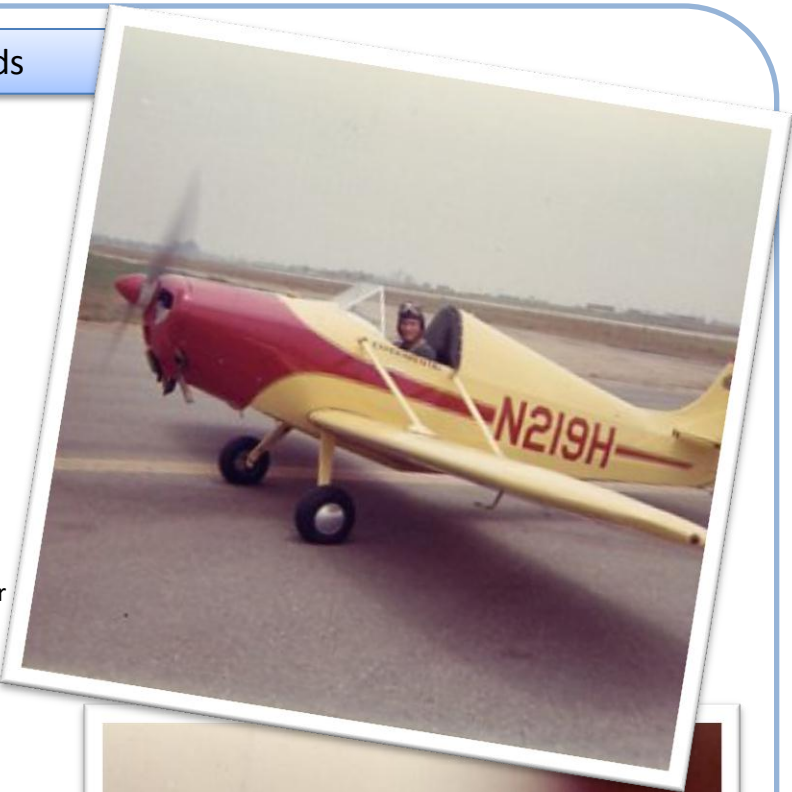
My aviation history started in July 1967 with a lesson in an Aeronca Champ at Fullerton airport in California to see if I really even wanted to learn to fly. At fifteen I told my dad that I couldn't wait to do it again.

So in February of 1968 my lessons began in Chino California in a J-3 Cub. After 12 hours I was ready To solo, but had to wait two more days to turn 16. It was a great birthday present getting to fly all by myself. That day is forever etched in my memory.

Now for the homebuilt phase in my life. My dad had A Stits playboy he built and had been flying for a few years and decided that the 8 bucks an hour to fly the cub had come to an end. After having accumulated a staggering 5 and a half hours of solo time I was deemed ready to fly his playboy. After flying it for about 20 hrs he sold it and bought our family J-3 cub thinking I would go on and get my private license. But for me, girls, a job and motorcycles were other demanding hobbies. But it was fun flying the playboy at chino pretending to Shoot down the B-17 and TBM forest fighting planes based there.

The next experience I had with Homebuilt aircraft was on leave from the COAST GUARD after completing my aviation structural mechanic rating. My dad was good friends with Ken Brock and I thought I would like to learn to fly gyrocopters. My dad borrowed a cougar that he did the first flight on for the owner, (Cougar is a copy of a tailwind), and we headed to El Mirage dry lake where Ken instructed Pilots to fly the gyrocopters. Started off in a gyro glider towed behind his car it was a two Place without the engine. Went up and down the dry lake that day and got the hang of it. Next day I soloed his powered gyrocopter, **it's the one hanging in the EAA museum.**

My first homebuilt that I built wasn't an airplane, it was a Hang glider. I had wanted to build a gyrocopter but only making 350.00 a month in the coast guard it wasn't an option. In 1973 the hang gliding craze was just starting, so that satisfied the need for speed, well
At least for getting in the air.



Member Spotlight continued – Mark Edwards

Then the usual lapse in flying due to marriage kids and trying to make a living. But if you try hard enough you can figure some way to get in the air, so I remembered my dad had acquired a project called a Flaglor Scooter he was always trying to give away. So I drove down to Los Angeles and picked it up and took it back to Summer WA. where I was living at the time.

Four thousand dollars and two years later “to my amazement” I took the first flight, and it actually flew! It actually flew really nice!

That was in April 1986 at Thun field, now called Pierce County Airport. I flew it until 1990, the last year at was at the Woodland airport. I retired it and started working on my Wag-Aero Super sport, not knowing it was going to be a 6 year project.

The Wag Aero first flew July 2003, it was a rewarding experience since I built it from plans (the old school way) just like my dad and all his flying buddy’s had done when I was young.

I am now my current project, the new ONEX from SONEX. I have to say that after building a mostly Wood airplane “The Scooter”, a tube and rag airplane and the Super Sport – Has really been enjoyable to build.

An all aluminum airplane is the kind I was trained and worked on in the Coast guard . I guess the RV guy’s had it right. One last thing, I got my private pilots license right here in Kelso on April 29, 1989.

