Steve Redding

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MEMBER PROFILE

Warning!!! Do not fly or operate heavy equipment after reading this profile!!!
I was born April 3, 1947 in Wilson and have lived here all my life, except for a few months in Colorado Springs, Colorado and a year in Vietnam. WO3 and airplanes became a part of my life in the early 1950's. I can remember flying with my dad when I was three or four years old. He was my inspiration for flying, airplanes, and everything mechanical. As a young man in the 1930's he learned to fly and earned his aircraft license at the Curtis-Wright Flying Service in Washington, D.C. Afterward, he worked at Thompson Flying Service in Baltimore, M.D. His barnstorming career started with the purchase of a Waco 10 in Binghamton, N.Y. in 1935. He left there on January 10 in zero degree weather and arrived in Wilson 12 days later on January 22. I still have the propeller that was on that airplane. From the age of about 6 years old I spent many days being under foot at Wilson Flying Service, run by Tom Bowling. During these years my dad and I built and flew models, and worked on cars and boats. In 1957 I had my first race car (a kart). While hanging out at the airport I was fortunate enough to get rides in one of the Cubs spotting fields they were going to be spraying. This was a wonderous time for me! As I got a little older (early 60's) I was able to start "helping" Tom, Neil Olson, Donnie Barnes, and others work on the airplanes. Maintenance hops were another way to get to fly, my flying started soon after and I soloed in 1963. I got my private

license in 1964. I added a multi-engine rating in 1966 so I could fly right seat in charter flights. When we were dead heading I could fly left which was a great time builder. Life was good. Somewhere during this time I started my musical career. I played saxophone in the high school band, a Dance Band, a Dixie Land group, and for a short time played a little rock n' roll.

I graduated from Ralph L. Fike high school in 1965, then attended Atlantic Christian College for 3 years. During that time I continued to work with Tom Bowling and flew every trip I could: which meant I cut a lot of classes and ultimately led to my longest flight ever – to Vietnam in 1969-1970. During the years between high school and the end of my college days I bought, repaired, and sold several Corvettes. So when I returned from Vietnam I opened Steve's Corvette Shop. I figured I'd do a few more 'vettes' until I decided what I really wanted to do. That was about 34 years ago and I'm still deciding…….

My being a "jack of all trades and a master of none" led me into stock car racing and the parts business. We raced on short dirt and asphalt tracks and eventually on to Daytona, Charlotte, Darlington, Atlanta, Talladega, Rockingham, and North Wilkesboro. I kept flying enough to stay current. In 1983, Hunter "Stinky Jenkins" Sullivan and I teamed up to buy our first airplane together, a 172. I did this to save his life…. he can explain when he does his profile. That was 22 years ago and its still working. Man, I must have the patience of Job, maybe just crazy!

"Stinky" and I have had a few great experiences that I don't have room to relate here. The titles for some of them would be: "Bernie the French Canadian", "The Wasp Attach over Lumberton", and "Attack of the Balloon Squadron at WO3." Actually, the story of how Stinky got his name and shortly afterward opened the Aeromatic Aerobatics School is a good one. The schools slogan was "We put the scent in the seat!" I guess it explains itself. One time we landed the "Yonex" at Fallwell, Va. They thought it was a new religion come to town. There was another trip to VA at 2 o'clock in the morning that got out of hand. Its hard to tell I-95 and I-85 apart when nobody is really paying attention, It also seems like there was some "Special" airplane up there or something? There have been a few anxious moments also. One pitch black night over the Pamlico sound in the V-tail with a really rough engine was one of them. A landing at Jim Stones' strip (Tony's dad) got interesting when some sheep ran out on the runway. I think it was about 1200 feet long and got a lot shorter real quick.

I haven't flown as much as I would like recently but my love of flying, WO3 and all the people I've known and continue to meet have left a lot of good memories. Some of the people who helped with the early days were Tom Bowling Sr. & Jr., Neil Olson, Donnie Barnes, Frank Williamson, Joe Lawrence, Calbie Wood, Ed Clark, Les Lamm, Roy Evans, Roy Hines, an AMT that many of you know has been a special friend to Hunter and I. I learned today (1-17-05) that Roy was chosen as the Southeastern Region AMT of the year for 2004, a really great honor for a man who's been able to ply his trade of keeping airplanes flying for 39 years.

There have been some special airplanes too. 8922 B was the toughest 172 ever made (ask me.) The BT-13 and Stearman that Neil Olson owned, 270 R and 3349 P were both work horse Apaches, An L-5 Stinson, 7615 M, that Ed Clark and I flew around N.C. like it was ours. Actually it belonged to the CAP but I think all CAP flights

back then were flown with Bermuda Shorts and T-shirts as flight suits. Flying with the Red Baron Pizza Team was a thrill! The P-51 ride recently was a highlight – did I tell you about the P-51 ride? Flying with Jim Buchanan in his Stearman was about as much fun as a man could have also.

I could go on and on but I'll spare you. Thanks for listening to my ramblings. See you around WO3. Keep Flying.

-Steve Redding-