

# FAMFAM UPDATE

Friday AM Friends of Airport Manatee

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## MASTER PILOT

Another of our Airport Manatee friends joins the ranks of those earning the FAA's prestigious Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. Mark Conner received the award from FAA Safety Officer, Sam Lindsey, on Friday, February 25th before an enthusiastic Airport Manatee crowd. Mark's hangar, which normally houses his beautiful RV10, had every seat occupied with standing room only for the rest of us. Mark and Denise made the event complete by hosting lunch for everyone.

From his first flight in the back seat of a Schweizer 2-22 glider

with his dad, Mark was smitten with flying. He worked as an airport kid, soloed a glider on his 14th birthday, and his father cut off his shirt tail. He took up sailplane racing from that time on. While in the Air Force, he got his single-engine rating through the aero club and built hours adding a commercial, instrument, and CFI ratings. He continued soaring with his dad including winning the 1-26 National Championships at the Air Force Academy in 1981. Hours were built instructing in the base flying club while stationed in Korea.

Mark entered the aviation profession flying bank checks in the C-310, upgrading into the Piper Cheyenne II, and then into a Lear 24E. In 1988, he was hired by Airborne Express flying the Nihon YS-11A and eventually became a DC-9 captain.



Another career change came when in 1998 he established his own charter business out of Deland, FL, operating a Lear 35A. He commuted from Airport Manatee in a variety of leased planes until he bought a Grumman Yankee taildragger with 150 hp. Next was a Grumman Tiger, which he eventually sold to Chris Conklin, a fellow Master Pilot, and now flies a Van's RV-10. He has been working with Dycom Industries running their flight department and buying and selling corporate aircraft for the last twenty years.

Congratulations, Mark, on a well-deserved award. Thank you for sharing your history with us.



## TONY'S DREAM SHIP

A pretty little Fisher Flying Products Dakota Hawk showed up at the airport on Thursday sticking out the back of a U-Haul truck, the result of a five-day adventure. Tony Bennett and Jack Nichols had gone to a small airport south of Columbus, Indiana to retrieve Tony's latest acquisition.

Immediately obvious, the cold, blustery, mostly sunless weather fraught with snow flurries did not present good flying weather for test flying or ferrying the bird back to 48X. The airplane appeared too good to pass up so the decision was made to haul it

the eleven hundred miles home. After locating a twenty-two-foot U-Haul truck, Jack made the sixty-mile trip to retrieve the vehicle only to find it was a twenty-foot box with only sixteen feet of floor space. This presented a major problem for a 19'6" fuselage. It took the two a half-day to figure out a safe method of getting it up and into the U-Haul, evidently not without injuries.

Once loaded, they began the long drive home early Wednesday morning arriving, road-weary, at 5p.m. Thursday. Friday, with the help of Ralph Stanyard and Rich Hueber, unloading the Dakota Hawk was a breeze. Jack dropped the rear wheels of the U-Haul into a ditch to lower the ramp angle and Jack's ramps were used to wheel it off safe and easy. Typical of Airport Manatee, plenty of help was available to get the aircraft into the hangar and assemble the wings.

The Hawk is the 48th one built (2012) with a recently overhauled Continental O-200A engine. An all-wood and fabric airplane, the workmanship is stunning. Tony is all smiles.



## MISSED FRIDAY FAMFAM?

You never know what might show up at Airport Manatee on Friday mornings. If you weren't there, here is some of what you missed. A beautiful Stearman N3N flew in, got gas, and left with a low pass streaming a trail of billowing white smoke. Unfortunately, I didn't get my camera out in time to catch the show.

The little yellow two-place taildragger that showed up had a number of people scratching their heads. "Is it an RV?" It did

look strangely familiar. Those of us who spent time in the Grumman trainers recognized it as an AA1 series converted to tail wheel. I believe it also sports a 150 hp engine. It had come to the airport to show to a potential buyer but left without a sale.

The wind blew a steady, strong crosswind providing entertainment watching pilots demonstrate their landing skills. As usual, plenty of cookies, brownies, donut holes and more kept everyone happy.





## ENGINE NEWS

With a few rattle cans of spray paint, simple shop tools, and a lot of elbow grease, you too can have an engine that looks new. With Rich Hueber's expert masking and painting, and my fumblings with new sheet aluminum, we managed a rather passable makeover on Ron Jarvis' Taylorcraft engine. Like a rusty bucket with baffling eaten away by seventy years of abuse, the engine looked out of place in Ron's otherwise tidy little blue and silver T-craft. Something had to be done. Now, when you pop the cowling, a jewel of a Continental A65 looks right at home.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sat. April 2 - EAA Chapter 180 Spring Cookout** - Airport Manatee (48X) 11am - 2pm  
Open to the public. Brats, burgers, hot dogs, side dishes, and desserts.  
All proceeds go to EAA Chapter 180 Young Eagles Teen Aircraft and Aviation Education programs.
- Sun. April 3 - Mike Walters Memorial** - Airport Manatee (48X) hangar #13, 11am - 12pm  
Mike's friends, family, and those interested in hearing of his life are invited.  
Come casual to share your memories and celebrate a life well-lived.

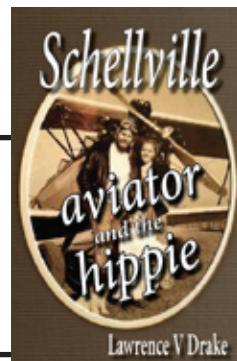
## BOOKS BY A FAMFAM AUTHOR

Available on [Amazon.com](#)

*Shellville: aviator and the hippie* - Lawrence Drake

*Panda Girl: China-Burma-India* - Lawrence Drake

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## Have You Ordered Your Cup?



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If you have any announcements or news you would like to share with the group, please Email it to me and I will include in the next update (whenever that may be.)

[ldrake@drakeip.com](mailto:ldrake@drakeip.com) or phone 970 593-2711