

Pilot Profile: Dave Simonson

by Russell Knetzger

At age 48, Dave Simonson has lived a life more in vogue with people 30 years his senior, and more in tune with the European system of living and education. And yet since childhood he has only lived in Greendale, Wisconsin, a southwestern suburb in Milwaukee County. Greendale is unique because it was opened in 1936 as an antidote to the Great Depression in the economy. It was a Federally planned, English-style "Greenbelt Community", with 1,000 acres developed as a pedestrian-oriented village, surrounded by 4,000 acres of open land, all carved out of the Towns of Greenfield and of Franklin. Dave's grandparents were charter residents in 1936. The 4,000 acres were eventually developed, and Dave now lives in the far southwest corner of the village, near S. 76th & Loomis Road, with wife Rhonda and sons Arron and Corey, and daughter Rebecca, college and high school ages.

In recent decades such suburbs have converted their school systems to college preparatory, abandoning the hands-on industrial arts shop classes on which Dave thrived in the 1970s. In high school he took four years of metal shop, four of woodworking and of electronics (leading to a "HAM" radio technician's license, including proficiency in Morse Code.) That's how he met (over the air waves) recently deceased club member Viktor Zernikel. Viktor spoke highly of the German Apprenticeship form of education, which Dave pursued at Milwaukee Area Technical College, where Dave now teaches tool and die making. Dave's father, Lauren, did such work at Ladish in Cudahy, and had a home-shop on which Dave as a youngster could practice.



At MATC Dave started a major in industrial maintenance-electrical, similar to Viktor Zernikel's major in Germany. Dave even did an apprenticeship at Allis Tool & Machine on 94th & Schlinger in West Allis, run by three German emigres. By then Dave had switched to tool & die, given his home head-start in machining. Following MATC, Dave's jobs included Cooper Power Systems (oil cooled pole transformers) and Lakeside Mfg. In Bay View, makers of stainless steel carts. Dave also worked with Milan Zdrubecky at one shop. UW-Stout classes were taken via instructors who traveled to Milwaukee. Dave also mastered "SurfCam," the machinist's equivalent of "Auto-Cad" computerized made maps.



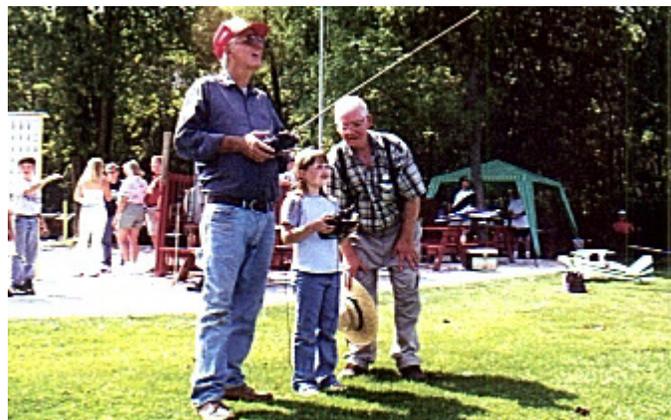
Dave Simonson and his P-51 Mustang, 63" span, .70 OS 4-cycle engine, painted to match one his uncle maintained in WWII for Captain Knickman, who displays proudly the model photo in his Texas office.

In high school in 1973 Dave first saw a fellow student's model aircraft magazine, which led to Dave's entry into free-flight and U-control flying. Given his Ham radio knowledge, it was natural in 1975 to venture into radio control with a Kraft R/C system. Later at the County Field on Oakwood Rd. in 1979-80, Floyd Katz helped Dave built his own Heathkit.

The first R/C plane for Dave was a Hobby Shack 3-channel trainer. Actual soloing took place on a friend's Buzzard Bombshell style, with Art Schmidt as flight instructor at that era's Hales Corners field.

Dave served the RAMS Club as its Vice President in 1985, succeeding David DeMars as President through 1986, due to the untimely death of DeMars.

Other interests for Dave have included restoring and riding older motorcycles, such as his 1975 Suzuki and a 1977 Kawasaki. Photography became an interest in the 1990s. Dave took the club's most



famous Fly-In photo, the Katz-Stilley 1999 picture above, now in our County annual reports file.

RAMS Horn, May 2007, Bill Stilley, Editor
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