



EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT AVIATORS touch down, and camp at the Wallace Municipal Airport while enroute to the Outer Banks. (L-R) John Hauck of Titus, Alabama; John Bickham of St. Francisville, Louisiana; Steve Green of Etawah, Tennessee; Gary Haley of Houston, Texas, and John Williamson of Arlington, Texas, each fly Kolb™ aircraft they built themselves. (Staff photo by Sheila C. Young)

Five Ultralights Take Flight After Overnight Stay in Wallace

by Sheila C. Young
Staff Writer

Five men from four different states flying five experimental "ultralight" aircraft crossing the country on their way to Kitty Hawk then crossing back to the 2003 Kolb fly-in in London, Kentucky, made Wallace part of their adventure.

The planes gently touched down on the eve of sunset, Wednesday, September 24, and set up camp for the night at the Wallace Municipal Airport. It wasn't just happen chance even though a jovial aviator in the group said he saw an open patch of green surrounded by a strip of asphalt and thought it would be a good place to stretch his legs.

This flight plan as many others the men have set out upon had been mapped out from the get-go. None had ever visited Wallace, but one of the pilots, John Hauck, did know a Wallace native, Joe Bryant, an avid pilot.

With nothing but a blanket of stars in the sky, a sleeping bag on the tarmac, the men bedded down and enjoyed North Carolina's cool fall night air and its fine hospitality.

On the morning of September 25, the men bedded down and enjoyed North Carolina's cool fall night air and its fine hospitality.

John Hauck of Titus, Alabama; John Williamson of Arlington, Texas; Steve Green of Etawah, Tennessee; John Bickham of St. Francisville, Louisiana; and Gary Haley of Houston, Texas, are licensed pilots, aircraft homebuilders and aviation enthusiasts. All became friends via the internet. Each has a keen interest in flying and was determined to build his own experimental aircraft.

They became familiar with each other through Kolb™ builder's list, a company out of London, Kentucky. After conversing via e-mail, the aircraft builders decided to take an adventure, test their aircraft and tour the countryside. Four met in Alabama, set their GPS, made a few stops along the way and met up with the fifth pilot in Elizabethtown (NC) around midday and made their stop for the night at Wallace.

All agreed in wanting to fly out to the Atlantic Coast and visit the place where Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their first experimental plane. The men felt a deep connection, in that they too built their own planes and received much the same cynicism, jeers and stares from the public.

They wanted to make the connection in Kitty Hawk and see firsthand its flat and especially wide shoreline and nearby Kill Devil Hills where the first heavier-than-air flight was recorded on December 17, 1903. They wanted to fly over the mountainous sand dunes that reach 100 feet in height. Kill Devil Hills is also home of the first "unmotorized" gliders, which is similar to today's mod-



JOHN WILLIAMSON OF TEXAS buckles up for safety before departing Wallace Municipal Airport. Williamson along with four other experimental aircraft enthusiasts whose planes resemble ultralights were enjoying the scenery, having come from the southwestern United States. All had a keen interest in visiting the Outer Banks before attending a fly-in at Kolb Aircraft Company in London, Kentucky. (Staff photo by Sheila C. Young)

ern ultralights.

London, Kentucky. (Staff photo by Sheila C. Young)

ern ultralights.

Today's Technology Reaching from Yesterday's Past

All of today's Kolb™ lightweight two-seater planes are classified as experimental because they are built from home kits. The average weight for one of these machines is 500 pounds and can cruise at 75 mph. One pilot laughed and said sometimes the birds pass him, but he didn't mind because he was in no hurry. "It is not how fast one can fly, but how slowly one can fly that makes for enjoyment and fun flying," said John Williamson.

The pilots who recently enjoyed the hospitality at the Wallace Airport said these toys, constructed with their own two hands, are not cheap nor built overnight.

"You could probably sink as much money as you wanted into one of these aircraft," said Williamson. Even though none would pinpoint an exact price they spent on their aircraft, they did say it would take an investment of \$20,000 just to get started and additional \$10,000 to get it RIGHT!

There is more to building these flying machines than bolting parts in place, pulling sailcloth over the wing sleeves and painting it fanciful colors. There is as much as 400 to 500 hours of labor tied into the aircraft depending on the instrumentation, and degree of finish. This type of aircraft can climb to 1500 feet and more if needed to get out of a "head room" (bad weather).

More about the Pilots

John Hauck of Alabama is a retired Army helicopter pilot and has seen the rough terrain of the

world. While he doesn't miss com-

bat or the rigors of military life, he missed the scenery of viewing life from the air.

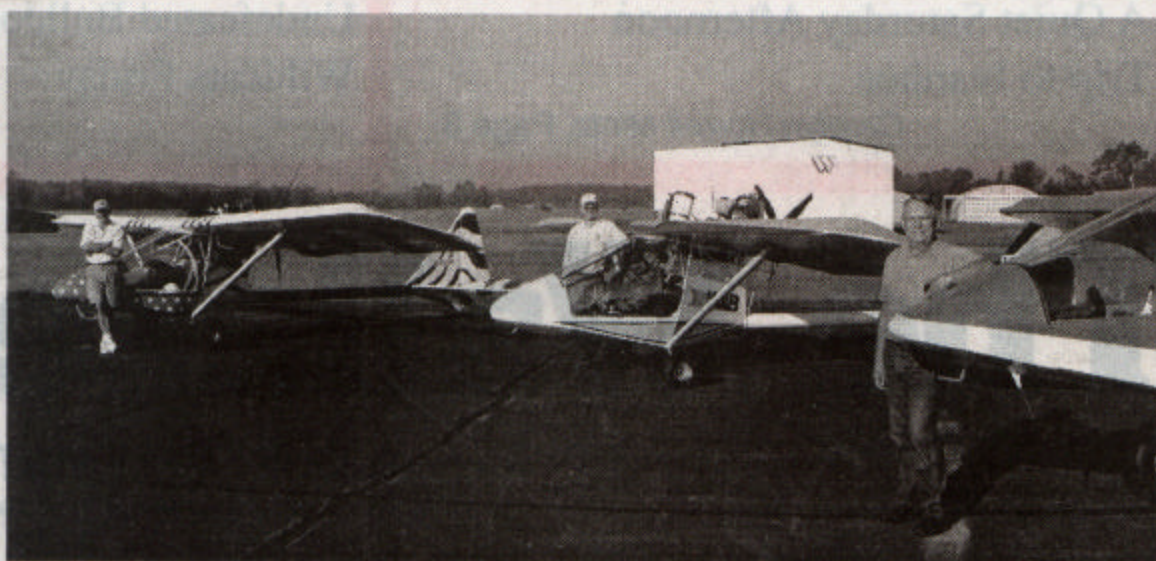
Hauck set out to build his own machine using a Kolb™ kit. He is the proud owner of a beautiful yellow and red painted experimental aircraft with a Rotax engine manufactured by the Kolb Aircraft Company. "Being retired enables me to travel," said Hauck. And travel he does. One of his favorite spots to visit is Alaska. The aviation enthusiast has logged thousands of miles on his experimental aircraft.

John Williamson of Texas is also a retired Army helicopter pilot and a retired airline pilot. Williamson said that he can now view life in the slow lane, stating his King Kolbra experimental aircraft with a Jabiru 2200 engine with patriotic colors of red, white and blue, suits him fine. "There's lots to see from up there and I have the best seat in the house," he smiled. Williamson has logged 2,800 miles on his aircraft from recent travels.

Steve Green of Tennessee said that he did not retire from anything but worked this past week as he joined up with his friends in Elizabethtown for the extended leg of their journey. Green pilots a Mark III manufactured by Kolb and one he assembled to completion in January 2001 with bright colors of white, yellow and red. It is equipped with a Rotax 582 engine. On this trip Green will log approximately 1,000 miles.

When Green was asked about the safety of these machines, he added there is a parachute on board, but is only used once. "It

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AFTER A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, THESE PILOTS from the southwestern United States set out for the next leg of their journey. (L-R) Gary Haley, Steve Green and John Williamson, each built and designed their two-seater aircraft. The men departed the Wallace Airport and flew to Kitty Hawk. After spending a day there, they changed directions and headed for a fly-in at Kolb Aircraft Company in London, Kentucky. (Staff photo by Sheila C. Young)



JOHN BICKHAM (L) OF LOUISIANA AND JOHN HAUCK OF ALABAMA are comfortable in their two-seater Kolb™ experimental aircraft. They along with three friends whom they met while constructing their aircraft decided to tour the east coast before attending a fly-in at London, Kentucky. (Staff photo by Sheila C. Young)

Five

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is used to save a pilot's life not his airplane," smiled Green.

Gary Haley of Texas was quiet spoken but is no novice when it comes to flying experimental air-

craft. Haley also built his own Mark III, Kolb experimental aircraft. He also flies a Cessna 172K, and a single place glider. Haley's plane is also painted in patriotic colors and distinctive in design.

John Bickam of Louisiana, who speaks with a wonderful yet distinct accent, resides only a hop, skip and jump from Baton Rouge.

His love for flying began as a child.

"I have always wanted to fly and as I grew older, I began to take flying lessons but stopped for a while and settled into married life," said Bickham. His love for flying never went away and as soon as he could afford to take to the skies again, he jumped at the chance building his own Kolb experimental airplane painted in brilliant colors of orange and white.

"I look at it like this, people need their hobbies and there are men with bass boats that cost more than my set up," Bickham smiled.

Boys will be boys and often have expensive toys. Despite the cost, these men say this adventure is priceless and are trying to absorb as much as they can before returning home.

News Briefs

DUPLIN COUNTY SHRINERS FISH FRY set for Wednesday, October 8. (Watch for further announcements.) Proceeds go to Children's Hospital.

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH will meet on Thursday.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETING, Tuesday, September 30, at 6:00 p.m. at Duplin Adult Day Services, 101 E. Main St., Wallace. For more information call 285-0663.