

SEPTEMBER | 2021

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Family Flying Tradition

by JOSH RITTENBERRY



In the heart of Southeast Missouri, McGarity Flying Service carries on a tradition that dates back nearly 50 years when Dennis McGarity, who had grown up on a farm and watched the early ag pilots work in the area, began taking flying lessons. It was 1974, and while Dennis loved flying, he also saw a need for crop dusters in the area. With some determination, Dennis sought out an ag plane, a Piper Pawnee purchased from Mid-Continent in 1975.

After getting his commercial pilot license and attending some local ground schools, Dennis learned the business of being an operator as he went along. His love of farming brought with it valuable insight, such as the need to make timely applications. After that first Pawnee, the operation

later added Thrushes and Air Tractors.

Partner to Dennis from the get-go, in life and in the operation, is wife

Vanessa. Together, they were blessed with four sons. The oldest, J.R., inherited his dad's love of farming, while the other three, Scott and twins Jonathan and Jeremy, inherited the passion for flying. Thus, the family flying tradition was born.

For the McGarity sons it was natural to come work in the family business; they had already planted roots there. Growing up, the boys would spend time in the office with their mom, then they worked their way to the air strip to start helping load the airplanes.



As they reached adulthood, Scott, Jonathan and Jeremy each set a goal for themselves as business ag majors at Murray State University and earning their commercial operating license. While during these years they said goodbye to the farm and the operation, their absence was only temporary.

"The boys sidestepped formal Ag School," Vanessa McGarity explains. "Dennis felt he could do a better job mentoring them himself."

With his sons in various stages of becoming commercial pilots, McGarity Flying Service grew and prospered. Then came the time to put the new pilots to work.

"Sharon Watkins helped develop a training syllabus and Dennis watched the boys closely while they learned, always keeping the insurance company aware of the boys' progress. Dennis continued watching after them his whole career by often choosing to do the most dangerous work himself, when he didn't have to," Vanessa recalls.

With the operation in good, capable hands, Dennis had the time to devote service to the industry, serving as president of the Missouri Agricultural Aviation Association and always contributing in any way he could at various levels, no matter the capacity.

After spending a great deal of time building his operation and supporting the aviation community, it was with great sorrow that Dennis passed away suddenly on April 23, 2020.

"We greatly miss him," says Vanessa. "He taught us all well, and the boys have all stepped up to keep the farm and flying business going. I feel very blessed to see and work with the four of them. The boys also made great choices in their wives. Now I have four wonderful

daughters-in-law and six grandchildren with a seventh due on November 1st. Three girls and four boys. They are already enjoying flying, and I hear some talk of future ag pilots. For all this and more, we are thankful to the good lord for all our blessings.”



McGarity Flying Service operates three AT802s from their base six miles east of Sikeston, Missouri. Two are dual cockpit, and one is a single seat. They even do a majority of their own maintenance, with Kenny Jones stepping in as a mentor to ensure the McGarity sons are also competent mechanics, charged with taking care of their critical equipment. Vanessa reports the current fleet of aircraft are up-to-date and utilize all the latest technology at their disposal.

In addition to farming and flying, Dennis also passed on to his sons a good sense of work ethic and dedication to customers. These valuable tools come in handy as the operation treats a wide variety of crops in Southeast Missouri, which also helps to extend their season into the fall and winter months. Wheat, corn, cotton, soybeans, and milo are primary crops sprayed from within a 50

mile radius of the flying service. Oldest son J.R., who has a sizable role in ground operations on the farm, often steps in when the flying service needs a helping hand.

From the perspective of the family business, Vanessa believes the future of the agricultural aviation industry is bright. “There is some worry there won’t be enough pilots to handle the work demand,” Vanessa says, “But most of the operators in our area get busier every year. Being some of the youngest operators around, we feel confident that we will have long-term stability.”



On August 28, in conjunction with a celebration of 100 years of Ag Aviation, the National Agricultural Aviation Museum in Jackson, MS unveiled a special plaque dedicated to our late founder Richard "Dick" Reade, recognizing his lifelong and financial contribution to the museum. (Pictured L-R: NAA Museum Director Hayes Patrick, Dennie Stokes, NAAA President Mark Kimmel, NAAA State Board Member (MS) Glenn Holloway, NAAA CEO Andrew Moore)



On August 16 Charles Stokes took his first flight in the seat of our Turbine Thrush. The Stokes family now includes three generations of Ag Pilots. The future for the youngest Stokes is bright and limitless.

(Pictured L-R: Greg Stokes, Tracey Stokes, Charles Stokes, Dennie Stokes)

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1996 THRUSH S2R-G1 N2237D

9688.0.0 A/F TT, Hatfield Bottom Load Fuel, A/C, Vortex Generators, New Satlock Bantam, Flow Control, Stainless Steel Spray System, AFS Check Valves, CP Nozzles, Agrinautics Pump, Lane Electric Brake, Aircraft Radios, Fresh Eddie Current, Spar Caps 3220 of 6,200 Hour Life

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Hawg, VGs, Bottom Fuel/Dual Load, Intelliflow with Smart Pump, Leading Edge Lights, Stainless Steel Booms, Hopper Rinse, Bantam, Smoker, Spreader with Kicker Plate, CPs, MVP 50T Glass Panel

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2011 THRUSH S2R-T34 N70224

750 HP, 3100 TT Engine, Cascade Intake, Bantam GPS with G4, Screen, Intelliflow, 2-1/2" High Volume Spray Pump, Lane Electric Brake, Leading Edge Lights, Micro Vortex Generators, MVP-50 Glass Cockpit, Smoker, Bottom Load Fuel, Load Hawg, Added Step for Checking Oil, 10,500 Gross Weight Kit

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Cascade, MVT-50 Glass Panel, Load Hawg, Bantam GPS, Intelliflow, Leading Edge Lights, Vortex Generators, Smoker, Bottom Load Fuel

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2019 THRUSH, S2R-T34 N1009F

750 SHP Pratt & Whitney PT6A-34AG Turboprop Engine, Constant-Speed Hartzell Propeller, MVP-50T Glass Panel, Garmin G5 Attitude Indicator, 510-Fallon Fiberglass Hopper, 250-Amp Starter/Generator, Spray System w/ 41-inch Stainless Steel Gatebox For Dry Applications (seeding and fertilizer) and Emergency Liquid Dump Capabilities, Sherwin-Williams JETGLO Paint, Two-Inch Stainless Steel Spray System, Five-Blade Weath-Aero Cockpit Adjustable Fan, Three-Inch Side Loader, Streamlined Aluminum Booms, Wingtip Navigation and Strobe Lights, 228-Gallon Fuel System, Windshield Wiper and Washer, OAT Gauge, AmSafe Aviation Inflatable Restraint System, 29-Inch-High Flotation Tires and Wheels with Dual-Caliper Cleveland Brakes, and Zee Air Conditioner and Cabin Heat.

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1998 Air Tractor AT-802A N5094H

12,152.6 A/F TT, 1230 HP, 2000 SPOH, Reabe Digital Hopper, Quantity & Spray Boom Pressure, E-TEC Inc Fast Start System, Comm Radio, Hemisphere G4 GPS, RT Side Boom Shut Off, Smoker, Hydraulic Gate, Air Conditioner, Wipaire Vortex Generators, Wingman Wing Due at 15,823.2, Gear Due at 12,798.2, Eyebolt Stabilizer Due at 14,798.2, 4479.7 Hobbs

[More info](#)



1988 AIR TRACTOR AT-301 N69WN

8,900 A/F TT, 600 HP, 530.0 SPOH, 320 Gallong Hopper, Ag Pilot X GPS, Flow Control, Smoker, Stainless Steel Boom, Air Conditioner, VGs, Lane Electric Brake, Bottom Load Fuel, 25-Inch Gate, 2 Each Spreaders

[More info](#)



1997 Ayres, S2R-G10 N773CC

6500.0 A/F TT, 400.0 SPOH, Cool Start System, Hatfield Single Point Fueling, ATS-VGs, Ag-Tips-Marburger, Kawak Hydraulic System, Satloc, G4, Load Hawg

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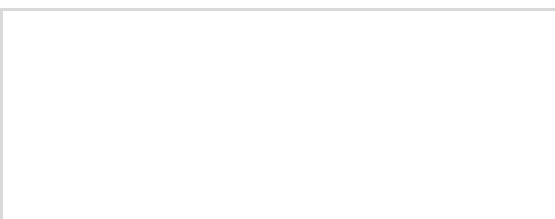
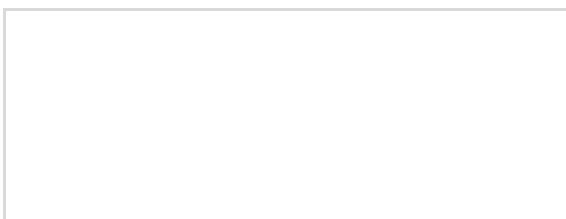
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Mid-Continent Aircraft Corp. is located in Hayti, Missouri, 80 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee. Although Hayti is not the geographical center of our nation, Mid-Continent is the center for all ag aviation needs. With excellent daily truck freight lines, air freight, Federal Express, and UPS delivery capability, MID-CONTINENT has and will continue to cover the world.