

APRIL | 2022

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RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

by JOSH RITTENBERRY



Driven by a natural curiosity, Terry Hamilton watched from the edge of his dad's farm strip as aerial applicators from neighboring North Dakota descended, reloaded, and climbed back in to the skies above southeast Minnesota. But it was a scene that was difficult to follow, even up close; a blanket of moths had covered the area for days and weeks. The air was so thick with the nocturnal insects that it wasn't safe to be outside at dark. Driving was considered treacherous.



In addition to a swarm of moths, corn borers had found their way into the stalks of field corn, endangering the season's yield. Tired of observing from afar, Terry finished out the evening helping load for the operators.



“I’ve been flying since I was 14 and farming since I was eight,” Terry says, when asked of his motivation to get into the aerial application business in the mid-1990s. “So naturally, something that combined the two activities I loved piqued my curiosity.”

Coming from a deep agricultural background, Terry remembers being put to work at a young age. “When I was eight, my dad put me in a combine and taught me how to run it. He made some modifications with a rope and stick so I could push and pull the clutch and some levers and away I went!”

The pilot who treated the pests near the family farm quickly encouraged Terry to consider attending a formal ag aviation school and to get his commercial license since there weren’t many operators in the area. A couple of years later, Terry sold off his dairy herd, quit milking, and went straight to a flight school in Oklahoma. Once training was complete, Terry bought a Cessna in Eloy, Arizona and began his spray career treating vegetables in the Arizona desert at night. In 1998 Terry established Midwest Ag-Air in his hometown of Adams, Minnesota.

In the beginning, the entire operation comprised of only Terry, himself. But slowly and surely it expanded into a two airplane operation that employs three to four pilots during the season. Terry’s devoted wife Cindy runs a tight ship in the office, and son Travis manages ground and loader operations.

“I have two Dromader M-18B aircraft. We converted them to Garrett Turbines in 2017, and I have never looked back. My biggest mistake was not converting them to turbines earlier in my career. No one misses round engines!”

In addition to harvesting corn, soybeans, peas, and oats on the ground, Terry has raised hogs, chickens, and cattle. The current state of the farm consists of corn and soybeans that thrive across 1,200 acres.



In the early days, treating canning crops were big business, but now the operation typically begins the season fertilizing corn and soybeans, before switching to fungicides and

insecticides, and eventually ending the season spreading cover crops.

Midwest Ag-Air operates across a swath of 100 miles of fertile farmland, running from the Mississippi River to just west of Interstate 35 and from the Iowa border to the south edge of the Twin Cities metro area.

When Terry and Cindy aren't busy with the operation and farm at the height of the season, they can be found at various trade shows and conventions. Terry is both a member of the National Agricultural Aviation Association and the Minnesota Aerial Applicators Association. Cindy has represented Minnesota as a board member of the Women of the National Agricultural Aviation Association. Terry says he has eschewed leadership positions within support organizations, "because I knew that in the long run Cindy would really be the one doing the work." So instead you will often find Terry in command raising funds as an auctioneer extraordinaire at the Tri-State Aerial Applicators Association convention.



Terry has lived in the Adams/Elkton area his whole life. He and Cindy have been married for 19 years and count seven children between them. Five kids are married, and the couple enjoys time with their seven grandchildren. When not farming or spraying, the Hamiltons enjoy traveling in the cold months when they can visit family and friends in warmer climates, except when they have travelled north to Alaska to watch the beginning of The Iditarod. For several years, the

couple was also the proprietor of Crooked Creek Guest Ranch, a recreational lodge business in Dubois, Wyoming.

"I try to spray or spread each field as if it were my own. I'm a farmer first, so I always look at the job from the grower's perspective, seeking to do what's best for the crop or land. Sometimes I have even talked a customer out of a job because I knew it wouldn't do the crop any good. My customers notice the care I put into the job, and they respect and appreciate our services. I try to teach and convey that same mindset to all our employees and pilots as well."

Knowing that ag aviation must grow and evolve, Terry has made it a priority to introduce it to curious and capable minds, the same way he was over 25 years ago. With the industry so much bigger than one person, Terry has made a mission of imparting wisdom and experience so that the future will be equipped with knowledgeable and competent pilots and operators.

"Over the years I have worried about the future of ag aviation because of obstacles such as EPA regulations, public image among conservation groups, and the elimination of certain products and tools necessary to do the job well. But every time I think of those things, something changes, the industry pivots, recreates itself, and rises to meet the challenge. I believe the industry has a secure future and a place in agriculture. By embracing technology and looking beyond the "well, that's how we've always done it" mindset, agricultural aviation can survive and prosper for another century."

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Watkins Retiring From Mid-Continent

On May 1, 2022 Sharon Watkins will retire from Mid-Continent after more than 40 years of loyal and dedicated service. As Sharon begins a new chapter, we can also announce that the Insurance Division will be led by Josh Rittenberry as Manager and Heather Riggs as Assistant Manager. These changes will conclude a thoughtful transition Sharon set in motion several years ago to instill confidence in our customers and partners that the future of our agency will be in competent, capable hands. With a combined total of over 130 years of aviation insurance experience, our Missouri-based team will continue to include Laura Terrett and Lisa Curtis, with Tanner Cobb set to join in the coming weeks. Included in those valuable years of experience is our Louisiana Insurance Division led by Shannon Guidry and comprised of Dana LaPoint, Troy Frey, Tiffany Istre, and Tyler LaPoint.





**Congratulations to Zack Graham of Tuckerman, Arkansas on the purchase of his AT602. We wish Zack and his new bird a safe and prosperous season.
(Pictured L-R: Danny Helms, Zack Graham, Josh Rittenberry)**

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Rhodes Promoted to Assistant Parts Manager



We would like to congratulate Regina Rhodes on her promotion to Assistant Parts Manager at the home office in Hayti. Regina has been a fixture at Mid-Continent for 22 years, handling customer billing, accounts receivables, scheduling freight shipments, and maintaining parts inventory pricing. In addition to domestic customers, Regina coordinates international import and export shipments and exclusively handles international customers in Belize, Guatemala, Ecuador, South Africa, and Australia.

Regina and her husband Larry have been married for 19 years and share four children and eight grandchildren. As a member of the First Pentecostal Church in Ridgely, Tennessee, Regina is the pianist and has enjoyed serving for many years teaching the youth in her community. When she is not spending time with her grandchildren, Regina is an avid gardener, baker, and cook.

"I appreciate Mid-Continent in trusting and believing in me over the years and I am excited for this new opportunity," Regina says. "I have made many friends and met many new people while at Mid-Continent and with our customer's patience and understanding, my knowledge of aircraft has greatly expanded. Although the supply chain has made times more challenging since the COVID pandemic, we will continue to strive to maintain our parts inventory and keep the best prices possible in order to meet our customer's needs. We will continue as a team to utilize all of our talents to benefit you, the customer, and will continue to build our loyalty to you. I like to say, 'I will go the extra mile to see your smile. Because no business is a business without its customers.'"



Mid-Continent was represented by Heather Riggs and Sharon Watkins at Scott Flying Service's annual fish fry. The annual event is a big draw and the fish is always delicious!

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40 Com, Garmin 430 GPS,
Garmin GTX-330 Transponder,



1978 AYRES S2R-600 N4001X

13,066.9 A/F TT, 6365 TT
Engine, 2679.8 TSOH, 750 HP,
Bantam GPS, Smoker, Bottom
Load Fuel, Vortex Generators
(Micro), 190 Gallon Fuel, Wing
Extension Installed, Weatherly



1978 AYRES S2R-T34 N4009J

19,811.85 A/F TT, 750 HP,
Smoker, Vortex Generators,
Single Point Fuel, Aileron Servo,
Winglet, Zee A/C, 500 Gallon
Hopper, 190 Gallon Fuel,
12,173.9 TT Wing Spars

Garmin 496 GPS (Panel Mounted),
Digiflight II Autopilot w/ Altitude Hold, PFD/MFD

[More Info](#)



**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

[More Info](#)



**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

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Tail, Zee A/C & Heat

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**2013 THRUSH S2R-H80
N3046N**

3,600 A/F TT, 800 HP, Load 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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**1983 AIR TRACTOR AT-301
N31580**

9679.2 A/F TT, 600 HP, 550 Engine TT, 350 Gallon Hopper, Bantam GPS W/ G4, Light Bar, Intelliflow, Stainless Steel Boom, Nozzles CP-03, Smoker, A/C, Bottom Load Fuel, New Side Windows

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Replaced

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**1978 PIPER PAWNEE
BRAVE
N3787E**

45,950 A/F TT, Lycoming TIO-540, 1851.0 TT Engine, 446 Hrs on New Carbine, Cylinders Top OH, Spreader, Boom & Nozzles, 86 Gal Fuel, Satlock GPS, 3656 Hrs Left on Wing Spars

[More info](#)



**1981 CESSNA A185F
N61955**

7300 A/F TT, 770 SFRM, Continental IO520, 285 HP, Audio Panel w/ 3 Light Markers, Garmin 430 WAAS, Garmin 255 Com, Garmin GTX 345 w/ ADSM In and Out, Glide Slope, Stormscope, S-TEC-50 Auto Pilot with Altitude Hold, Rosen Sun Visors, VG Kit, Horton STOL Kit, Float Kit, Cessna Turbo Vents for Cabin Cooling, Backup Altimeter, Backup Artificial Horizon

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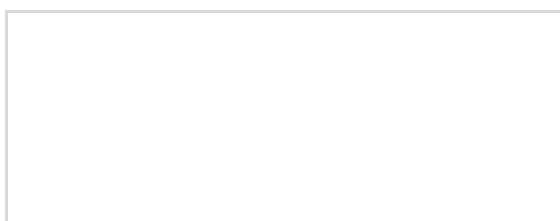
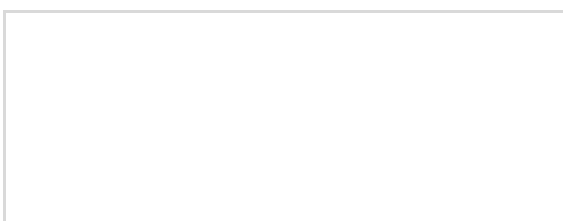
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Since 1949, Mid-Continent Aircraft has been the leader in Agricultural Aviation by providing a variety of services that exceed our customers' expectations. We are committed to the advancement of general and agricultural aviation technology.

As we move into each day, we will continue to grow with your business and provide the tools you need to be a success.

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.