

# THUNDERBIRD AVIATION

May 2013

Volume 3, Issue 1

The Official Newsletter of the  
Hiperlight

[http://  
www.hiperlightaircraft.com/](http://www.hiperlightaircraft.com/)



As this edition of the highly anticipated (and way overdue) is being written, I'm riding coach on board a DC -9 enroute to Sun "N Fun. It was a last minute decision to go as a spectator instead of displaying this year; too many projects in the works, and too little time. There have been a lot of things happening over the past several months

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## WHATS NEW

We've got a couple of things in the works to report, the first of which being a new R & D department of sorts. This was one of those things that wasn't planned, it just sort of evolved on its own after a chance meeting between a gentleman (and I use the term loosely) named Steve Mahrle and me. 2 years ago at Oshkosh, Steve wandered over to my exhibit, sat down and struck up a conversation. It didn't take long before I realized that he was a bit more than just another pretty face. He turned out to be a wealth of information, with a long and impressive background in aviation. But equally important was the fact that he knew as much about the history and development of the Hiperlight as I did.

I found out he had a shop in Berlin, Wisconsin. Berlin is located about 20 miles west of Oshkosh. Back home I had a

bent fuselage from an unscheduled arrival in a cornfield. I decided I had nothing to lose by turning him loose with it, and giving him a shot at repairing it. I dropped by a couple of months later just to check the progress and was surprised at what I found. Considering that he had no jigs or fixtures to work with, the repairs turned out to be every bit as professional as if they had been done at the factory.

It wasn't long after the subject of the 'Guppy' came up. The Guppy was designated the SNS-2, a wood and fabric fully enclosed biplane, and the forerunner of what is now the SNS-8 Hiperlight. Soon plans were being made for a wood wing version of the Hiperlight. Over the last year this wing has been designed, built, and is now being covered at the Hiperlight 'X' works. (We wanted to call it the Skunkworks,

but Lockheed beat us to it). Once we've had time to put enough hours on, and are satisfied with the performance, it will be made available in kit form.

The other big event was Thunderbird Aviation's acquisition of the tooling and manufacturing rights for the SNS-7 Hiperbipe. The Hiperbipe was conceived and designed just like it's siblings as a negative stagger cabin class biplane. That's where the similarity ends. The Hiperbipe is capable of doing unlimited aerobatics and offers cruise speeds of near 200 mph.

The previous owner, Mr. Rory Olson, will be staying with the company, and acting in a capacity of factory demo pilot, advisor, and liaison between Thunderbird and the aerobatic community.



## GONE WEST

This past December we lost a long time member of the ultralight community. Henry Schmidt passed away at his home in New Jersey. Henry has flown many different ultralights, but the Hiperlight was definitely among his favorites, having owned both a single and a 2 place example. He will be missed.



## HIPERLIGHT HAPPENINGS

There has been mention in previous newsletters about getting the SNS-9 2 place Hiperlight certified in the SLSA category. By the time you are reading this, the process will be underway. No time frame has been set, but once it's established, newsletter readers will be the first to hear about it.

Right now we are gearing up for Airventure 2013 (Oshkosh). We will have our factory demo on hand, but have also had a couple of Hiperlight owners commit to bringing their machines to display. We would like to extend an invitation to any Hiperlight owners who are planning to attend this year, to bring their

aircraft to show off to the flying public. In addition, we are planning on having one of our aircraft in hand with the newly developed wood wing.

I forgot to mention, along with the invite for Hiperlight drivers to show up at Oshkosh with their birds, I'll even spring for a steak dinner for those that do.



# FEATURED PILOT

## CHUCK BAXTROM

Last year, I got a call from a gentleman in Wisconsin asking about a Hiperlight he had just purchased. Chuck was a student pilot at the time, and not having any tail wheel experience, he was naturally apprehensive about his new acquisition. I was planning on visiting Steve to see how the repairs on my 2 place were coming along, so I arranged to stop and meet Chuck, and try to answer his questions, concerns, but mostly to check out what he had just bought. All it took was one look to realize that Chuck had stumbled across what could only be described as a "smoking deal". I won't divulge what he paid, but suffice it to say that he got a pristine SNS-8 Hiperlight, with less than 20 hours on it since built in 1986. I later found out that all the time had been spent taxiing, and the plane had never been in the air.

Chuck was gracious enough to offer it to us to display at Oshkosh last year, and we are pleased to announce that he once again is willing to let Thunderbird show it off at Oshkosh.



# Classifieds

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# CARA'S CORNER



Recently, at one of our high level executive staff meetings, the suggestion was made to possibly have a staff member get out in the field, travel around, and see what the rest of the industry was up to.

Nobody thought it would be taken seriously, but our editor in chief, Cara Miller, took it to heart, and in February of this year, headed to Australia on a 6 month vacation, I mean assignment.



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