

Inside: A New Eye on the PA Environment

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Meet the

Sky King
of
Sport
Aviation

Mike Markowski embraces the Flight Design CTLS light sport aircraft at Liberty Sport Aviation, Lancaster airport.

His and Her
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And just wait until you meet our cover man, Michael Markowski. Wow – this enthusiastic 61-year old is flying high—literally! Contributing writer Scott Campbell introduces us to Mike, a leading authority on sport aviation, a publisher, writer and more. You will enjoy meeting him and can't help but be energized by his enthusiasm and zest for life.

Hummelstown Man Has International Impact

on Experimental Aviation

One day while playing with friends on a hill near his Lawnton home, young Michael Markowski turned his eyes skyward during a pensive moment and said, "I want to BE somebody!" It was a promise kept. The enthusiastic 61 year-old South Hanover Township man is a leading authority on sport aviation. He is internationally recognized for his foundational contributions to the development and growth of hanggliding and ultralight aviation, leading to the rising popularity of light sport aircraft (LSAs).

Markowski is a Hall of Famer of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), an organization boasting 170,000 members from 106 countries. He was recently nominated for enshrinement in the National Aviation Hall of Fame. Commendations from the United States Hanggliding and

Markowski with a model DC-3, like the first model airplane his parents gave him at four, Christmas 1951.



The Markowskis with Windy. It won top awards in the science fairs, launching Mike's career as an aviation pioneer and author

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Paragliding Association, President Bush, Governor Rendell, Senator Spector, the Dauphin County Commissioners, and Harrisburg Mayor Reed attest to his repute.

Markowski's resolve and energy were spawned decades ago, even before that hilltop epiphany.

"My earliest years were in Steelton," he reflects. "My grandfather's gift of a flying model airplane on my fifth birthday helped set my life's direction. The steel mill wasn't for me; I wanted to fly beyond all that black smoke!"

"Initially, my teacher/father encouraged my aviation interests, including a Christmas gift of a model DC-3 when I was four," he says. "Later, visits to the Smithsonian and an airplane ride at age ten unlocked my desire to be a pilot, aerospace engineer, and writer. Being a strict disciplinarian, my father challenged me and my interests, and an intense father-son conflict ensued. Feeling he was against me, but being the eternal optimist, I took it as reverse psychology, as though he was testing my resolve. In the face of my father's confrontative approach, my loving stay-at-home mom encouraged me to follow my dream."

After the family moved to Lawnton and grew to six members, Markowski's father began selling encyclopedias to augment his

modest teacher's salary, and stopped indulging his older son's passion for aviation. Any purchases would have to be on the boy's dime, so he started earning money by shoveling snow, delivering *The Patriot News*, picking fruit at Srite's Orchard, ushering at a movie theater, and cashiering at a supermarket. Buying his own clothes and bicycle, he learned self-reliance and the value of hard work, qualities that have served him well.

Markowski's father forced him to play the saxophone, which he did well enough to be in a dance band. And, he enjoyed the friendships and challenges of Scouting, but eventually moved on from those endeavors to pursue his aviation dreams. An influential incident in which Markowski confronted one of his bullies, soundly beating the taunter into submission, marked him among peers as a boy best left to his own activities.

"When I entered Central Dauphin East High School in the fall of 1962, I vowed to elevate science, academics, and aviation, while making a name for myself in a culture that revered only sports," he recalls. "I was determined to show everyone there was more in school to be recognized for than just athletics." By the time Markowski was a senior, he had accomplished that goal.



Tagged by classmates with the sobriquet "Orville", Markowski consistently earned recognition and honors in the Capital Area Science Fair and the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science for designing, building, and developing wind tunnels that he used for conducting cutting edge experiments in aerodynamics. He welcomed new attention from girls, but that from teachers and administrators facilitated Markowski's eventual induction into the National Honor Society, and selection as "Most Outstanding Science Student in the State." His persistence paid off with a four-year scholarship from Governor Scranton to study aerospace

continued on page 30

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HUMMELSTOWN MAN

continued from page 29

engineering at Penn State. Excited to launch a career, Markowski took summer classes and earned his degree in only three years.

In 1971, while designing a wind tunnel model of the Space Shuttle for a NASA job shop in Massachusetts, he constructed his first hang glider, and taught himself to fly it at a nearby ski slope. Thus did Markowski become an entrepreneur, instrumental in initiating and popularizing hang gliding on the East Coast. He started *Skysurfer Magazine*, and co-founded two hang gliding manufacturing companies.

Returning to Harrisburg in 1975, Markowski left behind his manufacturing interests to concentrate on writing. Two years later his first book, *The Hang Glider's Bible*, was published. By the time his second book, *The Encyclopedia of Homebuilt Aircraft*, appeared in 1979, Markowski was consulting for a local machine shop in the construction and marketing of the first airplane-like ultralight, the V-tailed Hummer.

Shortly thereafter, McGraw-Hill offered him a contract to write a book on the emerging ultralight aviation industry. Markowski preferred to focus on his own titles and, in 1981, founded what is now Aeronautical Publishers. He concentrated on safety issues in a series of books that eventually earned him such respect on the subject that he has been called to testify as an expert witness in ultralight accident cases.

The FAA used his fourth book, *Ultralight Aircraft*, to develop *Federal Air Regulation 103 - The Ultralight Rule*. To date he has published 35 books on aviation, nine of which are authored by him, and shared his passion for the topic with millions through freelance writing, advertising, books, and speaking.

The popularity of sport aviation notwithstanding, Markowski laments the dearth of pilots. "9-11 hurt," he says. "And earning a Private Pilot's license is not inexpensive, let alone the cost of owning an aircraft. The lowest line Cessna is about \$235,000." But help has arrived.

"The FAA and the EAA have joined efforts and developed the new Sport Pilot license," he explains. "It's more economical to obtain and designed for piloting LSAs. Carrying two, they observe weight and airspeed restrictions and are flown only during daylight. Airworthiness is approved by the American Society of Testing and Materials, instead of the FAA. This reduces the expense of owning and operating an aircraft. LSA prices start under \$50,000."

Markowski's partner in writing and publishing is his wife, Marjie. With degrees in business administration, social science, and social

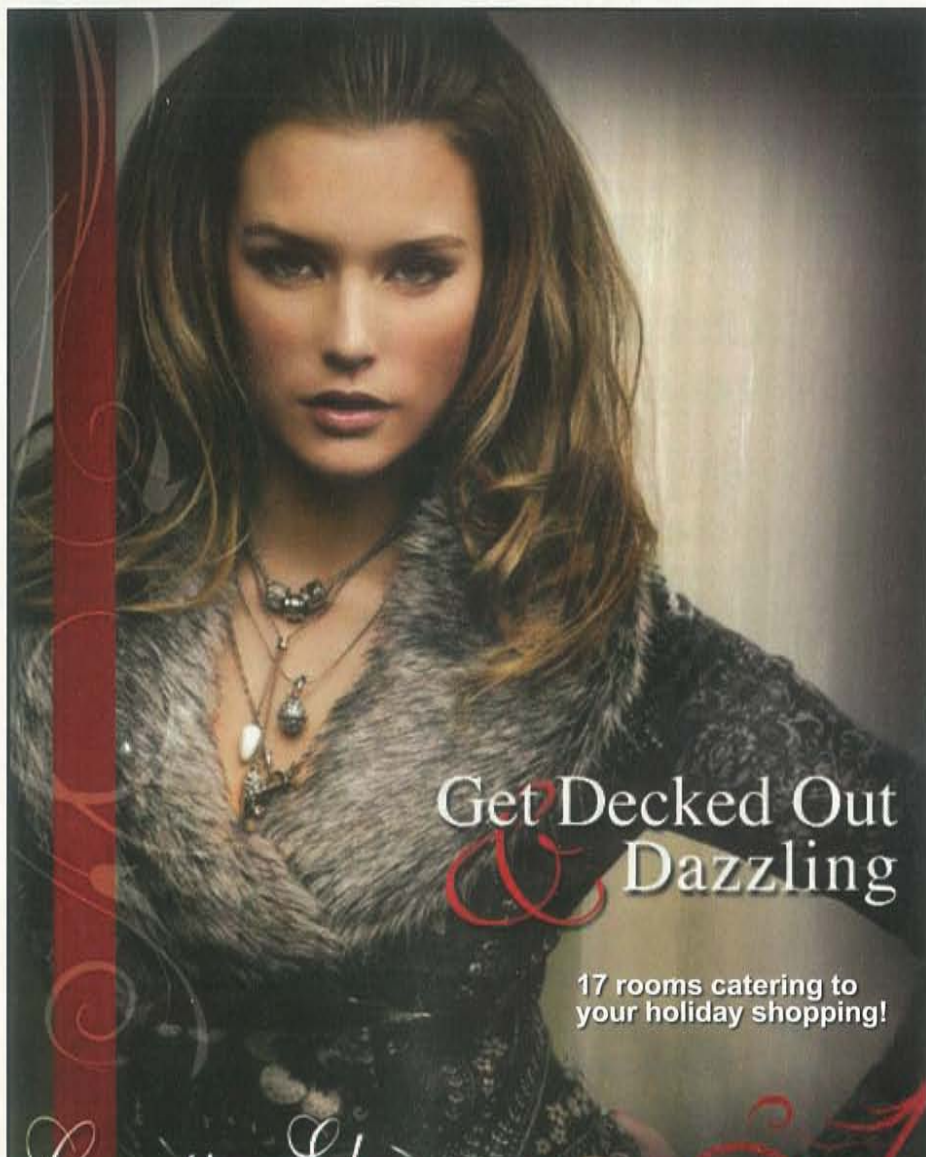
work, she is well-qualified to work with him in the development, production, and marketing of books that advance positive paths to personal and professional success. Together they have created Possibility Press, publishing 37 titles and selling over 2 million books, with translations into more than 20 foreign languages. "Couldn't do it without her," confesses Markowski. "Next to Him, she's the wind beneath my wings."

The Markowskis were among the half-million plus people (and over 10,000 airplanes) from around the world that descended on Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh, Wisconsin July 28-August 3 to participate in the annual EAA Conference - AirVenture. Designed to promote non-commercial aviation, this year's theme was "WomenVenture," a collaboration between Women in Aviation International (WAI) and EAA.

One of the EAA's youth programs is "KidVenture," which drew about 22,000 youthful participants. It provides a variety of hands-on educational experiences, including disassembling and re-building an engine, carving propellers, riveting, flight simulators, basic flight procedures, model airplanes, and pedal planes. The Markowskis demonstrated Windy, Mike's replica of the last wind tunnel he made in high school. They spoke on both the Aviation Hero Stage and at the Museum. A second youth program, "The Young Eagles", has given over 1.4 million youngsters a free airplane ride. Its founding chairman is Academy Award-winning actor Cliff Robertson. Chairman Emeritus is Gen. Chuck Yeager, while the current chairman is Harrison Ford.

As ambassadors of aviation, the Markowskis are combining aviation and motivation, working toward having Mike's memoirs made into an inspirational movie, documentary, theatrical play, and success course. "They'll be based on my adventurous life, teaching important life lessons while encouraging viewers to follow their dreams," states Markowski. "We've purchased my boyhood home in Lawnton and are refurbishing it for a movie set. Mayor Reed is enthusiastic about the project," he smiles, "as plans include filming in the Harrisburg area."

Entitled *Wings of Dreams - One Small Gift Can Inspire a Dream as BIG as the Sky*, the coming-of-age story chronicles the events and activities that established the foundation for Markowski's happy, successful life. The objective is to share the stirring account of how his passion for aviation enabled him to overcome "insurmountable" obstacles and live his boyhood dreams, inspiring others to follow theirs while, simultaneously, showcasing aviation. Its aim is to present an exemplary model for today's youngsters, and their parents. **HGB**



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