

THROUGH THE YEARS WITH PRIDE



1970

THEN



NOW

2017

*The Ron Menzies
Family Story*



THROUGH THE YEARS WITH PRIDE



The Ron Menzie Family Story

BY RON MENZIE

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Acknowledgements

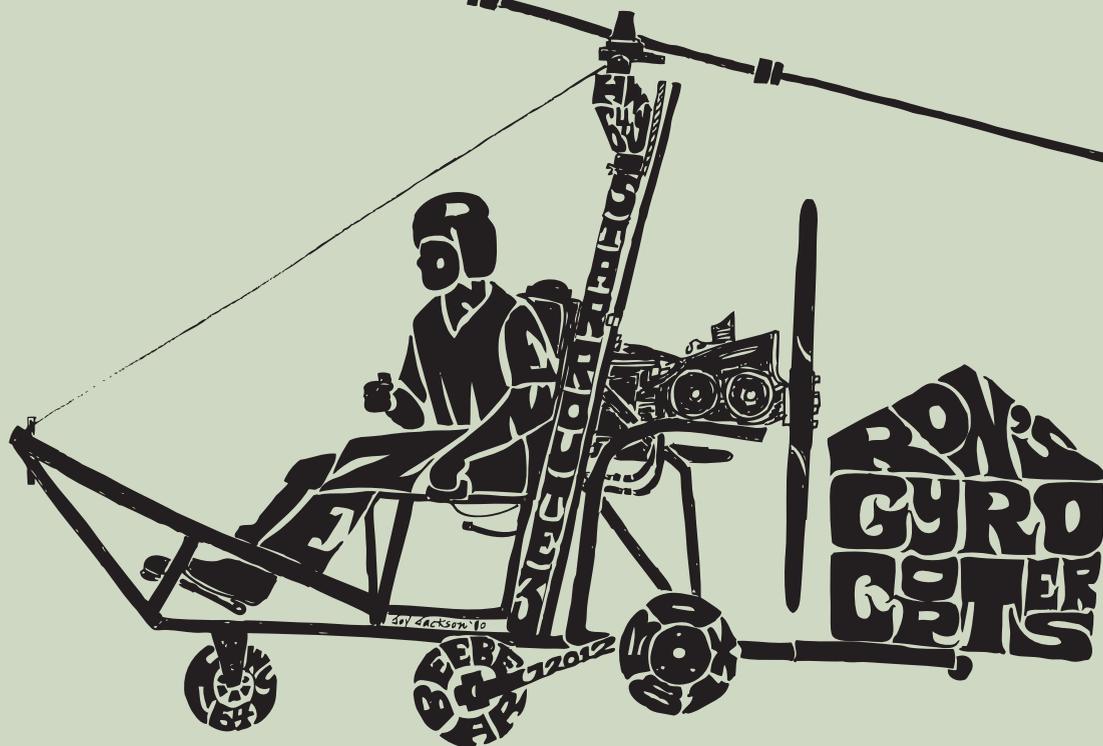
Sandy, Steve, Erik, & Heather - The Menzie Family
Bill Hogue
Joyce France



*Thanks to Sandy
Menzie for her
contributions.*



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Thank you to Joy Jackson for the Gyroplane art.
A gift from Sandy.

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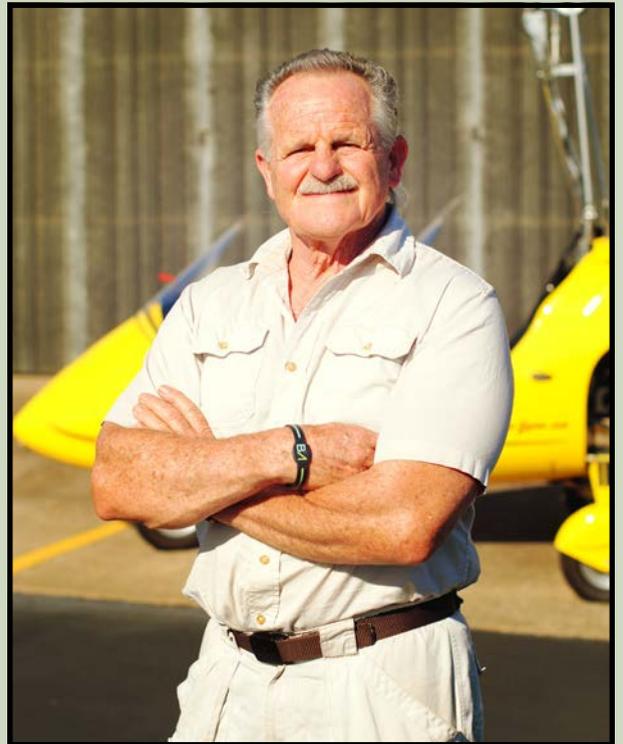
*Special effects photo of Ron
flying by Joyce France*

Chapter 1

Reflecting on the many years and proud memories that my family and I enjoy, makes me appreciate the unique aviation family relationship we have and we would like to share this with you.

It all began back in the summer of 1967 when my wife, Sandra, and I were out for a Sunday drive in Rhode Island. We noticed a strange-looking object flying near the Westerly, R.I. Airport. It sort of resembled a helicopter. We drove to the airport where this thing had landed and soon we learned what a Bensen Gyrocopter looked like. Clyde (Jack) Gordon was the proud builder and pilot and little did we know that the years to follow would gift us with joy and harmony with the sport of flying Gyroplanes.

Soon after becoming good friends with Jack Gordon, I sent my airframe order off to Bensen Aircraft Corp. My son, Steve, was a couple of months old and we lived in a third-floor apartment. Of course when you're just starting a family, everything is on the shortage list: money, tools, and especially building space.



Ronald Menzie, 2017

My boss invited me to construct my Bensen Gyro in the basement of his huge house. What I didn't know at the time was that he had 12 kids. That's correct, t-w-e-l-v-e (5 living at home), and most of them were at the grab-and-run-with-things stage. My income for buying Gyro parts came from working at night at the local Beach Batting Range. I constructed my entire Gyro from raw materials. At that time nothing was available as pre-formed and pre-assembled, including the rotor head and the rotor blades. Every part had to be fabricated, drilled, and shaped to fit. Now the rotor blades took a lot of work, time, and most of all, self-confidence. They are the heart of the Gyro. They will be holding me up, I was hoping. The glue curing temperature was very critical. Quite often, using an electric blanket to maintain the proper temperature, my wife Sandy would have to adjust the blankets they were wrapped in. I'd call her from work to give her further instructions and to check on the rotor blades. I got to feeling

a little guilty since here we are, married for two years with a two-month-old baby, living in a third-floor apartment, and I'm buying a Gyro! Needless to say, we purchased our own home with, of course, a garage for the Gyro.

It never entered my thoughts as to how and where I would learn to fly this unfamiliar machine. Jack taught himself and was using his original rotor blades; I figured it must be easy. Bensen advertises "Fly out of your own back yard" - ignorance is certainly bliss.

Anyway, Jack gave me plenty of assistance in building and he also shared his learning experience with me.

Here my Gyroglider sits with its wooden rotor blades and outboard gas tanks, a full blown Bensen to the letter. My son Steve was at the crawling age so he probably thought this was part of life. Little did we all know it would be such a big part of our lives.

By now, Jack and I located a small group of folks in Danbury, Connecticut that were giving rides in a Bensen Gyroglider, Sandra, Steve, and I would start out at 4 A.M. Saturday mornings and drive 3 and 1/2 hours in hopes to get more glider time. There was always a crowd of folks in line. It took many weekends before I felt comfortable to begin practicing on my own Glider. Sandra managed to get some time in the glider, which really helped.



Ron getting ready to go flying

Sandra became the official tow-car driver; she would spend hour after hour on weekends and evenings driving our one and only 1964 Ford Falcon, towing either the dual-seat glider or our own Gyroglider back and forth at Richmond Airpark, a 2,100 ft. runway.



*Ron teaching himself runway towed flights
1969*

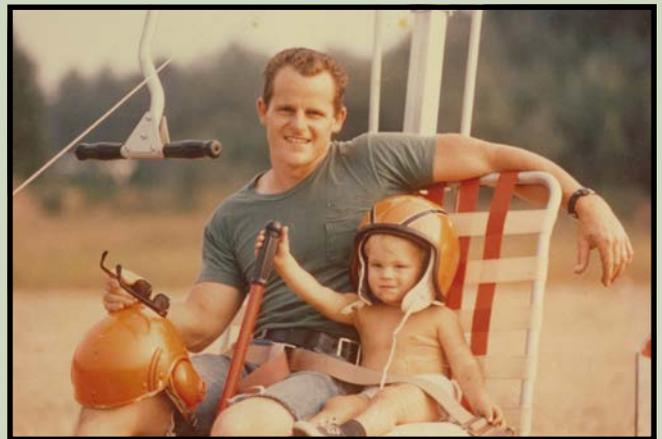
Chapter 2

I was in no hurry. I didn't want to break those nice rotor blades Sandra and I worked so hard to build. I recall Sandra driving the tow-car with our two-year old son Steve and 8 months pregnant. She had to sit on a pillow so her tummy could fit into the steering wheel properly.

It took me a while to save up enough money so I could buy a Mac Engine (this was a military drone 2 cycle 100 horse power engine that had to be hand started) and other parts to complete my Gyro. During this time, Jack and I built a dual-seat Gyroglider and began teaching folks how to fly. Jack and I partnered and became Bensen Gyrocopter dealers under the name Eastern Bensen Gyro Sales & Service located in Richmond Air Park, Richmond, Rhode Island. The first day Sandra was released from the hospital after Erik was born, I picked her up and we went straight to a Gyro Fly-in at Richmond Airpark. Erik would soon realize that a Gyrocopter would be part of his life as well.



Sandy, 8 months pregnant with Erik & Steven (1 year)



Steven's first flight on the Gyro. August 31, 1969

As both Steve and Erik got older, they both continued to maintain a strong interest in Gyroplanes, All of us would attend lots of Fly-Ins and Air shows soon after I completed adding an engine to my Glider. I then realized that all my teaching in the Bensen Gyroglider experience

was a great asset to my powered flight transition.

Sandy and the boys would always be with me at the airport to watch me fly. I felt very lucky to have my family taking part in my interest when I now realize that they had sacrificed their interests for mine.

As the boys reached the age to be able to handle tools, they were a great help and very enjoyable to watch as they learned. Sandra's mom and dad lived in Arkansas and we would drive there each year to visit and enjoy life on their 90-acre farm. After several years of flying under my belt, we decided to trailer N-3891 the 1500 miles to Arkansas and see the different countryside.



Stu Wickson & Ron just finishing a flight

Stu Wickson got to be good friends with us and he, being a high-time airplane jockey, was a great help to me. He built his own Gyro and we taught him how to fly in the tow Gyroglider. From that point on all we did was cross country flying. I am very thankful for Stu's sharing of his aviation knowledge and experience with me. Flying these Gyros is a very small piece of the pie, it's the fellowship with the wonderful people you meet, Stu was one of these nice folks. He became a part of the family as the years rolled on.

I recall Stu and I flying to Block Island from Westerly, Rhode Island, it was a hazy day but we headed in that direction anyway and soon the outline to the island became visible. The trip there seemed like forever (12 miles) with nothing under us but ocean. It was a great trip, we did a lot of flying around the island. Most of my flying has been over water and woods. I've always run a Mac Engine and it has treated me well with over 2000 hours. Some people swear at the Mac, I swear by the Mac. Without Stu's adventurous spirit, I would probably still be flying patterns around the airport.

While we were visiting Sandra's mom and dad in Arkansas, we thought it would be a good time to purchase some land for retirement. Of course it had to be suitable for a runway and we found 18 rectangular-shaped acres. It was a hog farm (no hogs) and I could imagine converting the two large buildings (one building was 30 feet by 90 feet and another half that size) into shops and hangars.

Chapter 3

I remember when Steve and Erik built their own first Gyroglider and assembled it at the Rockford International Popular Rotorcraft (PRA) Convention. They were on top of the world, standing by their Gyro as it was displayed on the flight line among the rest of the best.

Upon our return home, Steve asked if he could solo the Gyroglider. Now the test for old Dad's confidence arrived. I knew he was ready and Steve knew it too, but there was this feeling deep down inside that's saying, "Dad, you don't have any more excuses, but wait - no, go for it." You really have to be confronted with this situation to understand how I felt. The next thing I knew, we were all headed for the Petit Jean Airport with the glider loaded, Mom with her camera, Erik as ground support, and dad with a lump in his throat.



Ron training in the Bensen Gyroglyder, tow vehicle driver Sandy Menzie

After everything was unloaded, Steve and Erik aligned the rotor blades with the hub bar, but they let me torque the bolts. To watch these two guys move around, getting things done never ceased to amaze me. I wondered, does it get any better than this? I realized later it does. Explaining things in detail as the boys were growing up sure paid off. It takes more time while they are learning. But believe me, it's more than rewarding when they can help you do most anything. Best of all, it's fun growing up as a family team. I made a few runs down the runway, but there was too much crosswind for Steve to solo. We waited around until evening, hoping the wind would die down, but it didn't. Steve was very disappointed. We went home and waited for a better day.

When Steve got home on Wednesday, October 11, he said, "Today sure would be a good day to solo," He and his brother loaded the Gyroglider and when I got home from work, we headed for the Carlisle Airport. It was closer and we were racing the approaching darkness of night.

The boys had everything ready to go and I mentioned something about the wind when I heard Steve say, "It's OK Dad, right down the runway and steady." I thought, Dad, you don't have any more excuses. I don't know who was more excited. Erik knew it would be his turn soon. Golly, I'll get to enjoy this again!

We all stood around Steve as he sat in position in the Gyroglider discussing what our signals would be. We noticed Steve had tears streaming down his cheeks. He said, "I'm nervous." I told him we didn't have to do this today, but he insisted it was alright. We didn't get 50 ft. down the runway when Steve gave us the "thumbs up" signal. His feet could barely reach the nose wheel steering bar. This was one of those moments one cannot explain the pride and joy, you must live it to feel it. Later that next year we were in Mt. Pleasant, Texas, with the Gyroglider and Steve flew the Gyroglider, solo, for CFI Andy Anderson, who signed a log book and presented it to Steve. That's one book that he cherishes. Erik had his dreams all in place. He just got the previews of his turn at this. However, he was just 9 years old at the time!

Steve soloing in the Bensen Gyroglider

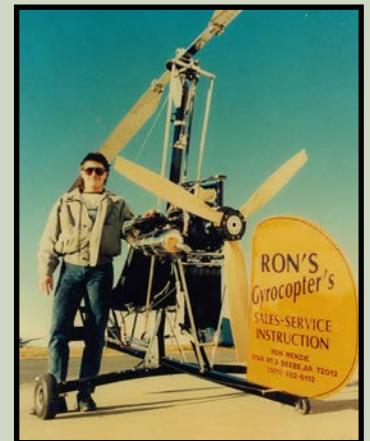
Steve's 1st solo event poster



Little Steve with Big Dreams



Steve's solo powered flight



Chapter 4

In 1975, we had moved to Arkansas (see page 21 for short story). I mentioned to Sandy and the boys that I would like to fly my Gyro from my grass strip at home to the International Rotorcraft Fly-In at Rockford, Illinois, and then on to Oshkosh, the big one. Without their involvement, this trip would be very difficult. They became as excited as I was. A trip such as this one: 700 miles, 10 different airports with the unexpected. It helps to have a good ground crew and I had it all and more.

I won't bore you with the details of the 700 mile trip but it was most enjoyable. Sandra would film each airport departure, I would always be waiting for her and the boys when they arrived. I ran into all kinds of bad weather. At every airport, Steve and Erik would bring me snacks and drinks. When I got ready to depart, the boys would hold the Gyro in position while I hand started it. I would always explain the various accidents and what to be cautioned about when around Gyros. Through the years they both learned to respect Dad's Gyro. They, now as adults, have enough experience and knowledge to make good common sense decisions. Sandra was always positive with everything I would do, never selfish but with plenty of reason to be. It wasn't long before Erik had enough flight experience under his rudder pedals to think seriously about going solo in the Gyroglider. We were asked to bring our Gyroglider to the Texas Rotorcraft Annual Fly-In at Mt. Pleasant one year to give rides; it was there where Steve soloed for CFI Andy Anderson two years prior. So when I suggested, "why don't we have Erik solo?" Erik said, "Your words were taken right out of my thoughts". It was another great time of my life. Here is son #2, a carbon copy of Steve's interests. Of course Sandra likes to make up appropriate posters for events like this and she certainly didn't let this one slip by.



Erik's 1st solo flight in the Bensen Gyroglider, traditional shirttail cutting by big brother Steve

Erik did quite well with his first solo flight and Andy Anderson did the honors with the log book endorsement and shirt tail snipping. You know boys, especially brothers are always competing. Steve already had his sights set on flying solo in the powered Gyro.

We all made lots of good memories and then came the age for girls and cars. Steve put his Gyro skills and knowledge aside as he ventured on with other interests. Erik, being 2 years younger, remained my helper, catching up on things as I always had Gyros to work on. The down side of a mom and dad's close relationship with their sons and daughters is the day they leave the nest. They seem to take a part of you when they leave.

Erik moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and was busy with life's more important priorities and chores. Not being nearby, he didn't have the chance to keep his Gyro interests going. Steve remained close by, however, and with his other interests, he stayed quite busy. It wasn't until several years later that he asked me to teach him how to fly the powered Gyroplane.

In the mid 80's, Bill Parsons developed the first gyroplane two seat trainer. It had tandem seating and powered by a McCullough 2 cycle drone engine. Bill basically took a standard Bensen gyrocopter and added 2 feet to the length, added another seat, and dual controls.

Bill was one of the many gyrocopter pioneers that participated in the evolution of the gyrocopter of today. These are people that designed, built, and fabricated parts to construct their own experimental gyrocopter. In fact, these same people, including myself, had to teach ourselves how to fly these experimental home-built gyrocopter. There were no gyrocopter flight instructors to teach us.

While attending one the PRA (Popular Rotorcraft Association) convention, Steve and I took a few pictures and took some measurements of Bill Parsons new one of a kind, two seat Parsons Trainer. Since we had already constructed several Bensen gyrocopters and we had enough parts laying around the work shop, we anxiously starting putting together our own trainer. This was a very exciting adventure for all involved. Once completed, and inspected by the FAA, it was legal to fly. I was ready to begin the test flight procedures.

I mainly built the Parsons Tandem trainer to teach both Steve and Erik how to fly and so they could have the chance to experience this great sport.



Another busy day of flight training N-18KL



Parson's Tandem Trainer N-18KL

Once I was comfortable in the rear seat, I began training Steve. My training schedule was always full on the weekends, but I would always manage to get Steve in the air each Saturday and Sunday. Most times only 15 minutes at a time. Steve put up with the same excuses from me prior to his first powered solo flight as with the Gyroglider.

Steve's determination, patience, and long-term exposure with Gyroplanes were worth the wait. Steve has accumulated over 100 hours in the single place and an unknown amount of time in the back seat of the trainer, with me in the front seat.

At the National Rotorcraft Convention held at Hearne, Texas, was another first for our family. Steve talked me into carrying both single-places and the Tandem Gyros to this convention. That was a chore in itself since we only had two vehicles with small trailers. A good Gyro friend, W.A. Westerman, trailered the third Gyro for us. After all these years of flying, that was the first chance Steve and I had the opportunity to fly single-place machines together in formation. Steve's next goal was becoming a Gyroplane CFI. He had all the required talents, especially his great flying techniques. He spent many weekends assisting me with my training.

Our family has attended all the P.R.A. conventions since 1969, including Oshkosh and it's great to watch all the same young adults grow up together as good friends meeting in various parts of the country. Heather came into our lives on July 11, 1978 and she, too, was a great help with our aviation activities. She also got her flying time in the tandem. Of course, by the time she could reach the rudder pedals, she was into dancing and playing the saxophone.



*Popular Rotorcraft Convention
flying in Hearne, Texas*

Jim McClendon was a fixed wing pilot at the Searcy Airport who was looking for someone to partner with him in the hangar. Little did I realize at the time, that this hangar would turn out to be a very popular worldwide Gyroplane training and licensing facility. I really didn't have a lot of foresight into this business. It all just evolved.

As time passed, I decided to build an office facility with living quarters upstairs over the office. I had no idea I was making it my home.

Sandy and I parted ways, so I decided to live in my hangar. Every pilot's dream, with everything I owned under one roof. I was training on weekends and in the evening on weekdays when I got off work. My son, Steve, helped me with this fast growing business for several years. He would fly when he had time and he'd help me with the valuable customers from throughout the U.S.A and many foreign countries.



Ron's Gyros - Flight Training Facility, Searcy Airport of Searcy Arkansas

I saw the need to help all these newly trained gyroplane pilots to complete their dream with licensing as the final goal. At the time the only person that was qualified to test for the issuance of a gyroplane pilot certificate were FAA personnel or a D.P.E (designated pilot examiner). A D.P.E is one who administers testing for the issuance of a pilot certificate. At the time, most FAA personnel were not qualified, however, Don Farrington in Paduka, KY, was one of the very few D.P.E's in the U.S.

This was another opportunity for another of my goals. This would complete my flight training facility as a one stop for all your gyroplane training needs. Now I could help customers complete their aviation dreams from start to finish.

My business was at a point where I had to leave my real job and do the flight training full time. This became a scary situation because I was unsure if I would be successful doing this full time and I was leaving a good job with a lot of benefits. The unknown was "will customers

spend Monday through Friday with me week after week?” But despite my fears I decided to leave my job and fulfil my dream.

I realized the need for an enclosed gyroplane for winter training since I was becoming very busy. I was now a CFI (certified flight instructor). I purchased a partially constructed RAF (rotary air force) gyroplane. I had been flight training in my tandem open gyroplane for the past 15 years (N-18KL with over 5,000 take-offs and landings).



Steve & Harley working on the RAF



*RAF - Sparrow Hawk Trainer
N-7143H*

It was not safe or practical to train someone in a side by side gyroplane if they were going to fly a single place gyroplane so it was necessary to have both styles of gyroplanes. It just made the transition much easier and required less training.

The side by side enclosed RAF gyroplane that I had purchased needed lots of work to become airworthy. Steve and I spent long days and evenings working on it before we felt comfortable enough to conduct flight training. I first had to train myself for the transition into a side by side seating arrangement. During that time there were more single place gyroplanes because the RAF was new on the market. Years later the RAF was modified with a sparrow hawk conversion and is still used in my flight training program.

Steve Graves, a CFI (Certified Flight Instructor), was a flight instructor at Don Farrington's flight training facility located in Paducah, KY. He was instrumental in getting me my flight instructor certificate in 1989. At the time, Don Farrington was the only flight examiner for gyroplanes.

The Next Chapter

2017 Ron's Gyros is still very active with flight instruction and testing for the issuance of pilot certificates. Over the past several years the European Gyroplane market has developed some very well designed makes and models so I decided to market the German design AutoGyro, GMBH. I now have a MTO sport Gyro that I use in my flight training program.

It has been my greatest pleasure to meet and fly with some of the most highly experienced aviators from the United States and many other countries around the world. From the novice to the highly experienced, I have learned from each of them. Hopefully, I've made them better pilots and they have made me a better instructor.



The Art of Teaching & Learning

The following covers the relationship between student and instructor and includes my observations and conclusions.

When I started flying my Bensen Gyrocopter in the 70's all I kept hearing and reading was accidents and incidents. As the years continued so did the saga of Gyrocopter accidents and fatalities.

As other Gyroplanes/Gyrocopters designers marketed their make and model Gyroplanes in the US market the accident rate continued therefore establishing a terrible safety reputation as it continues 40 years later. Even as more flight instructors became available the porpoising and power pushover accidents became the dominant cause of the many Gyroplane fatalities. This being a concern for the Federal Aviation Agency- FAA is one of the primary reasons for not allowing light sport Gyroplanes in this country fully assembled and Ready To Fly.

For several years now there have been a lot of European Gyroplanes of different makes and models in kit form being constructed and flown in the United States. The European Gyroplanes are very well designed and very stable in the air however the accident rate has not improved much that I have noticed. The power pushover and porpoising accidents are pretty much nonexistent with these new European Gyroplanes. The common accidents with these new European Gyroplanes are rotor blade flap on takeoff and roll over on landings. "WHEN PROPERLY APPLIED," the takeoff and landing procedures, that have been around since the introduction of the single place Gyrocopter have been proven successful over the years. They can be applied to any two bladed teetering rotor blade system that most Gyroplanes incorporate today.

These new European Gyroplanes continue to add to the accident/incident rate with either rotor blade flapping on takeoff resulting in loss of control and roll over or roll over after landing; both resulting in substantial damage and possible injury.

Gyroplanes can be very unstable during ground operations especially during takeoffs and touchdowns during landing. Being a tricycle gear configuration and very short coupled, especially with the single place Gyroplanes and the side-by-side seating arrangement. The tandem configuration has a longer distance between the nose wheel and the main wheels and

that provides more stability to prevent roll overs.

If you try to fly a Gyroplane like an airplane in a flat attitude on takeoff and landing, it will increase the chances of rotor-blade flapping on takeoff and roll over upon landing.

The nose wheel should be the first wheel off during takeoff and held at a high attitude. During Landing the nose wheel should be held at a somewhat high attitude and the last wheel to touch the pavement. This is a soft field takeoff and a soft field Landing configuration.

I encourage all my students to utilize that style of takeoff and landing using a little power just before final flare on each landing. Especially with Gyroplanes using unitized steering where nose wheel is coupled with the Rudders. With most U.S. Gyroplanes having tail wheels and low RPM pre-rotators, forces the pilot to use good rotor blade spin up management during the initial take off. This becomes common practice during the teaching-learning process and is Paramount for a safe take off, especially the first take off of each flight.

I would prefer a student taking off slightly on the backside of the power curve with proper rotor RPM and Runway alignment gaining proper climb speed and ground effect with a chance of settling, rather than taking the chance of too much forward cyclic, flat attitude flat rotor disk, possible low rotor RPM and High Ground speed. There are only a few basic Maneuvers along with some takeoffs and landings to become safe and proficient when flying a Gyroplane.

It seems obvious to me as a flight instructor that Gyroplane accidents are not related to make and model as was earlier thought, with the Bensen Gyroplane. I've experienced the following Gyroplanes in the past 40 years, training building and flying the Benson, Air Command, Rotary Air Force (RAF), Sparrow Hawk and now the present-day European makes and models. In my opinion, there is a serious ongoing Flight Training issue that's the cause of the bad reputation of the sport. Perhaps it's the quality of training or the lack of sufficient flight hours and experience in make/model.

Of course there will always be a small percentage of Pilots that push and exceed the aircraft's capabilities.

Having to take the FAA F.O.I. fundamentals of instructions written test. One would find the subject matter of this test anything but fundamental.

Teaching can be a challenge at times and so very rewarding both for the instructor and by far most important for the student. Proper effective Communications is very challenging. Most often your personality will control the method of how you teach and in many cases this

creates a conflict with the student's personality regarding the way that person learns.

Before I begin instructing a new student, I'll inquire about their preferred methods of learning. It could be either by explanation, discussion, training videos, or actively learning by doing. Learning by doing is by far the most productive method. Just a general conversation at first will enlighten you both regarding the comfort zone.

The new student has some apprehensions:

1. Being at a new location
2. Learning a new sport
3. Unknown expectations
4. Putting your full trust and safety in the hands of the flight instructor

Recommended Guidelines for teaching students with no prior experience

Begin with basic understanding all the flight controls in the following order.

1. Cyclic, rudders and this should be done before flight.
2. Flight Training should begin with the student learning the cyclic control only, with the assistance from the instructor. Concentrate on takeoffs and landings and pattern work.
3. Once safe consistent cyclic control is accomplished then you can add Rudder coordination with the cyclic controls, still doing takeoff and Landings.

The instructor must share the knowledge not try to impress the student.

Do not be opinionated.

During the initial primary Flight Training, based on very limited knowledge and experience, the student's reactions and movements of the flight controls will be jerky and mechanical.

As the student becomes more experienced with reaction time and control inputs, his/her control movements will become smoother.

This change in behavior comes from feeling what the Gyroplane is doing as it moves in various directions in small increments. The Gyroplane's rotor disc is independent of the rest of the aircraft regarding movement, therefore creating a lag in control response. You more or less fly by the "seat of your pants". Remember you fly the ROTOR DISC not the fuselage.

The major difference between a Gyroplane and a fixed-wing aircraft, takeoff is that full

power is not applied at the beginning of the Gyroplane takeoff run. The power is only applied as fast as the rotor will accept the incoming air flow.

This tactile touch control is sometimes very challenging for the student to achieve and may require extensive amount of training/practice. Remember the cycle control is moved with small pressures induced, instead of large movements.

(FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS ABILITY TO STAY OFF OF THE CONTROLS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, WHILE FLIGHT INSTRUCTING.)

Before I first begin flight instructing, I had accumulated approximately 2000 hours in my Bensen Gyroplane. I had also spent several years training in the Bensen Gyroglider. For those of you that are not familiar with that, it's a Gyroplane frame that seats two people side by side, only having the cyclic control and nose wheel steering. This Gyroglider is attached to a vehicle with a 75-foot good rope and is towed back and forth on the runway. We had very good results with this style of Flight Training.

Some of those many Pilots I trained back in the 80's and 90's are still flying today.

I'm sure some of today's flight instructors would get a chuckle out of reading this but it was our only choice at that time.

In 1989 I became a FAA certified flight instructor for Gyroplanes and I also was proud to have a Parsons tandem Gyroplane trainer, powered by a two-cycle McCulloch drone engine 90 horsepower.

I remember a few of my first students very well even with as many years of flying Gyroplanes and the many people I trained in the Gyroglider, this was in many aspects quite an experience.

I can recall as a new flight instructor just starting training in a powered Gyroplane tandem trainer. I was challenged by and learned from all my students. If the instructor accepts learning from various students, the benefits are shared by all. Remember the student and the instructor must work together.

Allowing the student to have as much control of the Gyroplane as is SAFE, is one very important skill a Gyroplane flight instructor must achieve. This may require many hours of flight instruction by the CFI.

If the flight instructor continues to manipulate the controls during flight instructions,

he will give the student a false sense of flight control inputs. The result can be a serious flight control problem especially during the students first solo flight. I have had to give transitional training to pilots that have been exposed to this situation.

When teaching in a Gyroplane that has heavy control stick forces, the flight instructor can continue to make slight control inputs without the student being aware, because of the control inputs being so minut. These control stick inputs by the CFI for the most part will not be felt by the student. The instructor should always explain the control Corrections that are administered at that time.

As the Flight Training continues with the same student, after several hours the flight instructor will be able to predict the students reactions and control inputs.

This allows the student to become more in control with less input from the instructor. THIS IS PARAMOUNT!!!

Not all good gyroplane pilots make good flight instructors.



A few of Ron's many students

Amusing Adventures

The Water Skier and Farmer

Stu and I were on one of our daily flights over Woods and Water in Rhode Island and we came upon this large lake and in this lake we noticed a lonely water skier. Stu and I didn't have any radio communications between us so we always used hand signals and as we approach the lake we signaled that we should get down and fly alongside of the water skier. So he took one side and I took the other and we slowly approached the water skier from the rear. As we made our low approach over the water and went past the water skier, obviously quite a surprise adding power to climb out to get above the trees at the end of the lake, but there were no changes in my engine power. As I was skimming along above the trees, the engine was just skipping and barely maintaining an altitude. I kept looking in advance to see any suitable landing spot but unfortunately I wasn't high enough to see far enough out to head in the proper direction. Lucky enough for me I came upon a field. It was a farmer's yard with a huge garden so I landed in the yard and as I was slowing down my rotor blades to a stop I noticed the farmer coming out from his garden with a look of surprise on his face. Off in the distance, I could still hear and see Stu flying back and forth over the lake assuming that I landed in the lake. I learned later that Stu flew back to my home and flew around my house for a while. Sandy came out wondering where I was so she took some white chalk and wrote in large letters on the blacktop driveway WHERE IS RON? I finally got in touch with my wife using the farmer's landline because there were no cell phones at that time. We got my Gyroplane on the trailer, back to the airport, repaired, and back in the air again. It was a Magneto problem after I just received the Mag back from a repair shop. So I started repairing Magneto's myself. Just another adventurous day flying Gyroplanes.

Salt Water Baptism

Stu and I would fly our single place Gyroplanes pretty much all around the area beaches in Rhode Island. During the beach season when there were not too many people on the beaches, Stu and I would fly along low along the beach just over the breakers. During low tide sometimes we would land and take-off on the hard sand close to the water. There were several private beaches along the shoreline and sometimes we would put the shadows of our rotor blades on top of a sunbather. One nice sunny morning when Stu and I were flying the beaches about a hundred feet offshore, I noticed my engine wasn't running too well so I decided to advance the

power and head towards the shore. Well I realized then that the engine would not increase in power and I wasn't going to make it to the shore. Needless to say I did a landing on the water, sunk all the way to the bottom approximately 75 ft down and landed on the ocean floor. The aircraft was up right. I was still strapped into my seat belt and having problems unlatching it. For some reason due to the confusion and fear, I was trying to unlatch my seatbelt with my left hand instead of my right hand and obviously that took more time fumbling around with that seat belt. By the time I released myself, I just couldn't get to the surface fast enough so it seemed. Stu was flying around doing circles making sure I was okay. Luckily I found a couple of scuba divers and they went in and rescued my Gyroplane from the ocean floor. Stu eventually showed up with his truck and trailer and we loaded the Gyroplane and headed back to my home. The house where we lived in Ashaway had a lot of windows in the front facing the driveway so as we pulled with my salt water soaked Gyroplane on the trailer, ironically my wife Sandy was standing there ironing my new orange flight suit that she just made for me. The first thing Stu and I did was disassemble the engine ,take it all completely apart, washed it in freshwater, and put all the parts in an oven to dry them all out. The rest of the Gyroplane did not sustain a lot of damage the rotor blades had to be replaced and other small repairs. We reassembled the engine and got it started and then took it to the airport and did a couple of tests flights. We were both back in the air again.

From Rhode Island to Arkansas

Sandy's Mom and Dad purchased 90 acres of land in Beebe Arkansas out in the country for future retirement to start a farm. Sandy and I would visit them on a week's vacation during the summer months. At that time the two boys Steven eight and Erik six years of age would enjoy the adventure of the long 2 day trip. After a few visits, Sandy and I decided to purchase some land for our retirement in the future. While visiting one year, we noticed that there was an old hog farm, no hogs but 18 acres and it had two large buildings for sale. One building was 90 ft long and the other was 50 feet long and also there was an old house that sat next to highway 64. It was one of those old southern looking houses probably 75 to 100 years old and it was up on rocks along the corners of the house to keep it off the ground. Ironically when we returned home from that vacation where I was working, I got laid off and we decided at that time instead of trying to look for another job in Rhode Island that we might as well just move to Arkansas.

This adventurous trip started in 1975 on Thanksgiving weekend. At the time we lived on a dead-end street in the country and we had beehives. We had a few rabbits and chickens and we had our own little farm going on there. We hated to just leave everything so in order to move what we had we had to do it ourselves. We rented a 24 foot U-Haul truck and started

loading on nine years of belongings. At the end of a long packing day, every nook and cranny in that truck was totally packed. We didn't have to worry about anything shifting during the travel; however, we still had a lot of stuff that we had to leave behind. We put our house up for sale that we had been living in for 9 years and it's amazing how much you can accumulate during this time.

We had a 1970 Volkswagen bus and we also had a 1964 Ford Falcon that Sandy bought that was our family car for a long period of time and it also was the official Gyroglider tow vehicle. It was a standard shift 4 door 6 cylinder and did great carrying us around on vacations, no air condition but it sure had a good heater. This was Thanksgiving weekend so the weather was very cold and the three beehives that had the bees were dormant so we loaded the beehives in the truck along with a freezer. We had a pretty good size freezer that was full of frozen food and that also was inside the truck. Since our truck was fully loaded I tried to start the truck to move it out of the driveway a little so we could hook up the vehicles and it would not start so we called U-Haul and they said well we'll come and just exchange trucks with you.

Well that wasn't a good idea so it was a carburetor problem and they gave me the part and I fixed it. Otherwise it would have been a few days before they could arrive at the house and fix the truck. Now we towed the 1970 Volkswagen bus behind the 24 foot U-Haul truck in the Volkswagen. We had Sandy's china-ware, a jade plant, and my ever so precious rotor blades that we both worked so hard to build. So now we had to load up the Ford Falcon with as much as she could get in there and also carry Steven and Erik, of course they took turns riding in the truck and in the car. So we loaded the trailer on the back of the Ford Falcon, loaded the Gyroplane on the trailer, put the ducks, chickens, and rabbits in cages and loaded all of that on the trailer with two bales of hay. Needless to say, the trip was quite interesting and adventurous. One time when we pulled in the fuel station to fill and fuel the truck and car up, one gentleman came out and he says, well looks like you have the farm, you just looking for a place to put it.

During the entire trip we were between two snow storms so we were fortunate we didn't have to drive through bad weather. We just had to plan our trip carefully. Every time we stopped at the end of the day, we had to make sure we were where we could park the truck next to an area with a long extension cord so we could plug the freezer in to keep the food frozen.

We lived in that old house along side of the highway for several months until our house sold in Rhode Island and then we had money enough for we could build our own house on the land that we purchased. The land that we bought had a suitable spot for a thousand foot runway. A couple of the neighbors came over and offered to let us use their tractors and various pieces of equipment to build the runway. We bought them some beer and they built the runway themselves and did a great job. It was 1000 ft long with trees at one end and high-tension wires

at the other, but it worked out great. I enjoyed many years of flying my Bensen Gyrocopter off of that little thousand foot grass strip.

We lived in the old house next to the highway for approximately a year while we built the new house. Living in the old house was quite an adventure because the wind would blow through it. We had to heat it with gas heaters and 3 gas stoves that we would heat pots of water on and fill an old cast iron bathtub and everybody would take a bath in the same water, of course the kids wanted to be first but they never did win that battle. Eventually we converted the barns into workshops, paint booth in the two-car garage, and completed the house and it was a very comfortable settlement there in Arkansas. The second trip that we had to make was after we sold the house in Rhode Island. This also was another 24 ft U-Haul truck and we had it full. I remember one day when I had to use the highway for a runway because the wind was out of the West. As I taxi down my gravel driveway out to the main highway, I noticed the state trooper was parked in the church parking lot that was close by. I wasn't sure I should take off on the highway with that state trooper watching me so I shut the engine off and waited. He eventually got out of his car and walked over to me and asked me if I was going to fly that aircraft. I replied I wasn't sure if I could and he stated well if you need me to stop traffic I can do that for you. So, I took off on the highway and did little aerial demonstration for him. Highway 64 became my alternate Runway. We all enjoyed our little Homestead Farm in Arkansas for many years to come.

VARI-EZE

It seems like every time we add to the family, I start a new aircraft. Shortly after Heather was born, the boys and I started constructing a VARI-EZE airplane.

During one of our yearly visits to OshKosh Air Venture, one of the world's greatest aviator events, Burt Rutan debuted his newest airplane design, the VARI-EZE. It was constructed with foam and fiberglass from plans. It was not a kit airplane. It was plans built. Up until this time in my aviation career, I had not been interested in airplanes but this canard style futuristic airplane just totally took me by surprise. I turned to Sandy and said, "I would like to build one".

For the next three years, we all pitched in to help with the building project. The boys were teenagers now so they were a great help. I spent most nights and weekends constructing my new VARI-EZE airplane. I worked with a friend, John Lambert, as we both built our own VARI-EZE'S together. I had never worked with foam and fiberglass, so this project was quite a learning experience to say the least. The first task was to convert one of my barns to a workshop because I needed a climate controlled room so the epoxy could cure properly.

Here we are at the Searcy Airport trailer loaded with two main wings, the canard, and the fuselage ready to assemble for the maiden flight. I have had a few rides in the back seat of a VARI-EZE and only a limited time on the flight controls.

I followed a Burt Rutan's recommendations for preparing yourself for the first solo flight in a VARI-EZE. Recommending I become proficient in three different types of airplanes; the piper cub, then the Cessna 150/172, and many hours in a Tomahawk.



N-718RM



*Ron & Steve
headed for
AirVenture in
Oshkosh, WI*

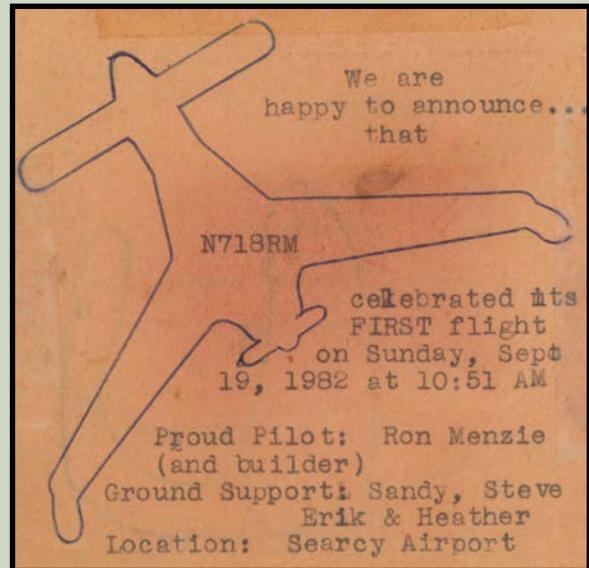
It's the final countdown to the first flight of an airplane that I spent three years constructing. What a feeling of accomplishment! It's every builder/pilot's dream.

My good friend Kenny Blalock was well known for his aircraft fabrication and he actually designed and painted the paint scheme on my VARI-EZE. Kenny was also there for my first flight. Unlike a gyroplane, you can't do short hops down the runway. This VARI-EZE approaches for landing at 95 mph. Here we go family and friend with cameras and one adrenaline pumped excited builder pilot ready for the maiden flight. Kenny and I discussed

the plan, take off, climb to 1000 feet, stay within reach of the airport and leave the retractable nose gear in the landing configuration, one thing not to bother with on landing. As soon as the VARI-EZE departed the runway, I just couldn't find the words to describe the feeling.

As I levelled off at 1000 feet, Kenny came along side in his home built Pitts Falcon, slowly rolling his Pitts completely around my VARI-EZE looking for any problem (so he says). I'll never forget when during his roll around me when both our canopies were face to face-looking at each other! After 4 touch and goes and 30 minutes of flying, I then realized my gyroplane experience was the best transitional training for my VARI-EZE.

Three years later, Steve and I flew it to Air Venture in Oshkosh, WI. Since then, every time I'd go flying, the kids would flip a coin for the back seat. Erik's size (6 ft, 2") eliminated him and Steve would rather fly the Gyro, so Heather ended up with many hours in the back seat of the VAEI-EZE--N718RM.



KEEP 'EM BAREFOOT 'N PREGNANT?



WORK AT RON'S ARKANSAS HOG FARM — WOMEN AND CHILDREN DOING FARM CHORES WHILE THE MEN PLAY WITH THEIR TOYS. LEFT TO RIGHT: RON MENZIE, BOB FRANCE, SANDY AND STEVEN MENZIE. (Photo by Joyce France)



Ron Menzie gets the gyroglider and tow rope ready for several interested bystanders.

What's Happening on Rockefeller's Petit Jean Mountain



Sandy Menzie and Heather have the tow truck well under control as Ron and his student descend for landing. Heather, 2-months-old, has spent most of her newborn life traveling to fly-ins and towing gyrogliders.

Photos by Joyce France

From left: Chuck Harris, Memphis, Tenn.; W.A. Bluff, Ark.; and, last but not least, the "Go-For" Westerman, Wiener, Ark.; Ron Menzie, Beebe, Ark.; Gang of Petit Jean Mountain.
Bob France, West Plains, Mo.; Marty Roe, Pine





Left to right: Teresa France and friend. Steven and Erik Menzie





Heather, Ron, and Steve.

“When fears are grounded, dreams take flight.”

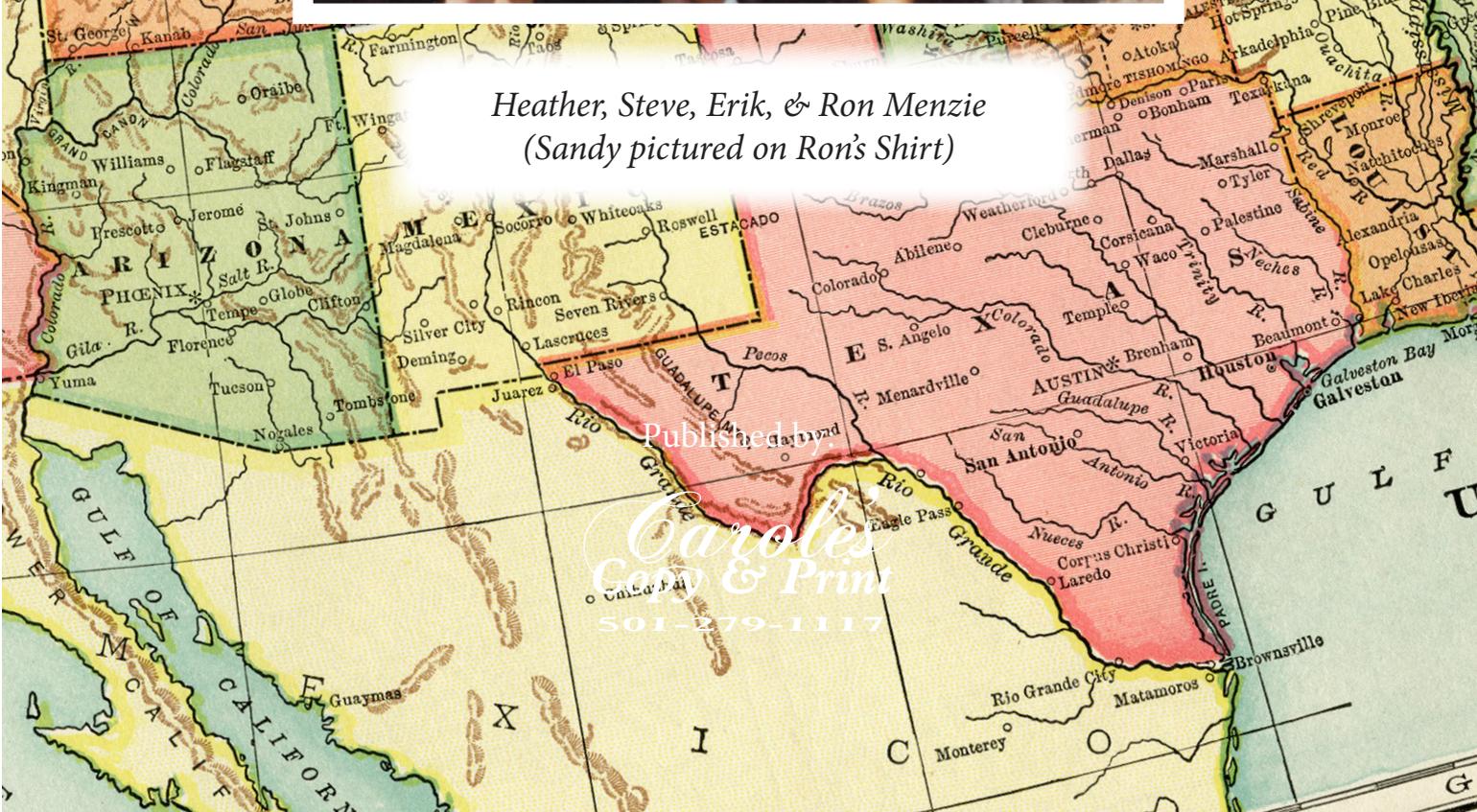
“To a pilot who ignores the instructions, it is indeed “a thing of danger.” Here lies the real challenge to you: it has been said that Gyroplanes “separate men from boys.” Men make the grade and earn admiration of their fellow men. Boys drop out from their own immature attitude towards instructions and the lack of drive and self discipline.”

Igor Bensen





*Heather, Steve, Erik, & Ron Menzie
(Sandy pictured on Ron's Shirt)*



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