



# Hangar Talk

June 2025

Northern Palm Beach County Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 203, Inc.

Volume 29, Number 6

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Share your aviation story with us to help inspire others!

## Breaking News

- New Website. Go to <https://chapters.eaa.org/eaa203> to see the new look!

## Can You Identify This Aircraft?



Send your Answer to [sdthatcher@bellsouth.net](mailto:sdthatcher@bellsouth.net)  
The answer will be in Next Months Hangar Talk

## Find the Air Speed Indicator

Hidden somewhere within the pages of this newsletter is an ASI similar to the one shown here (may be smaller).

All you need to do is find the page on which it appears, specify the article or photo and send to [sdthatcher@bellsouth.net](mailto:sdthatcher@bellsouth.net) to win. If Multiple entries, only one winner will be selected from those submitted. Winning Entries will be published in the newsletter. One Prize Only will be awarded for correct ASI location.

**ASI Winner:** the ASI was on page 1 just to right of engine stands.



**Aircraft Identification:** No winners last month (see Pg 3).

## Calendar of Events

### June 14th

EAA203 8:30 am, General Meeting with sausage, pancakes and coffee!

- Movie and/or Presentation
- VMC Club following Meeting
- Swap Meet

## VMC Club Meeting

The VMC Club is an opportunity to share knowledge and experience



## Swap Meet This Saturday!

Gather up all your unused aviation related items and bring to the meeting this Saturday. You can buy and sell any number of items and especially those great values that can be found in the tool crib in the hangar.

This is a fund raiser so anything you sell, be sure to contribute 10% of your sales to the Chapter.

Items can include avionics, tools, gauges and more. And don't forget to look over the great buys in the Chapter's Tool



### Young Eagles



Ever wondered what your neighborhood looks like from the sky? Or maybe you're

**curious how airplanes even work. You might even dream about being a pilot.**

If you're nodding your head "Yes" and are between the ages of 8 and 17, you're ready to take a free Young Eagles flight and see what real pilots do on the ground and in the air.

Since 1992, more than 2 million Young Eagles have enjoyed a flight from EAA's network of volunteer pilots.

**For more information contact Rick Golightly, metro9100@aol.com.**

### Directions

The next EAA Chapter 203 meeting will be held at the hangar located at North County Airport (F45). The EAA Hangar is found by going to the junction of the Beeline Highway (SR710) and PGA Blvd (SR786). Then go 2.6 miles NW; turn left at the airport sign, and cross the train tracks. Follow the road to the hangar, which is on the left-hand side before you get to the FBO terminal, hangar 11250-5.

### Barntoons



Used by kind permission of Dennis McLane (dennisdeanmclain@gmail.com)

## Last Month's Aircraft Identification – Wagner DOWA 81

The Wagner DOWA 81 (also known as the Pfeil 5) was an aircraft designed and built by Dr Gerhard Wagner in order to escape East Germany. (DOWA being a contraction of "Doctor Wagner" and "81" referring to the year of the intended escape.)

### Background

East Germany, then part of the Eastern Bloc, was separated from West Germany in the Western Bloc by the inner German border and the Berlin Wall, which were heavily fortified with watchtowers, land mines, armed soldiers, and various other measures to prevent illegal crossings. East German border troops were instructed to prevent defection to West Germany by all means, including lethal force (Schießbefehl; "order to fire").

Gerhard Wagner (b. 1939) was a qualified aircraft engineer. Whilst still a student, he had almost fled during construction of the Berlin Wall. However, he later accepted the situation. He married Ingeburg Hallbauer, and had three sons - Udo, Jörg, and Gerd. In 1961, the GDR abolished the aviation industry, leaving Wagner without any demand for his skills. He was also unable to pursue his passion of flying gliders, as the law allowed only those joining the Air Force to fly.

Wagner initially considered building a submarine to escape via the Baltic Sea, but doubted his skill in this area, and so turned to his strength: aircraft design. In order to prevent informants discovering the plan, he partitioned off the back area of his apartment kitchen using cupboards and curtains.

### Design

By mid-1979, Wagner, a qualified aircraft engineer, had completed the designs for his airplane. He designed it with an enclosed cockpit and contra-rotating twin propellers in pusher configuration powered by two 19 hp engines taken from a pair of motorbikes. The motorbikes also provided the wheels for the undercarriage. He calculated the flight weight to be around 580 kilograms (himself, his wife, and



his three sons), which necessitated adding landing flaps for the wings for better control. The aircraft, at just under six metres in length, was also designed to be easily disassembled into four parts, the largest of which did not exceed four metres in length, allowing it to be hidden and transported in a car trailer.

### Construction

Wagner built the airplane in secret, using whatever materials he could acquire. Wagner's son Udo, who was seventeen at the time, was a motorbike enthusiast, playing for a Dresden Motoball club, and was able to secure the purchase of two heavily used MZ-ES-250/2 motorbikes for 4,500 Ostmarks. He then overhauled them, dismantled and removed the gearboxes in order to allow the crankshafts to turn the propellers, and reversed the polarity of one of the engines. The engine mufflers were rotated 90° due to the crankshaft being repositioned lengthways.

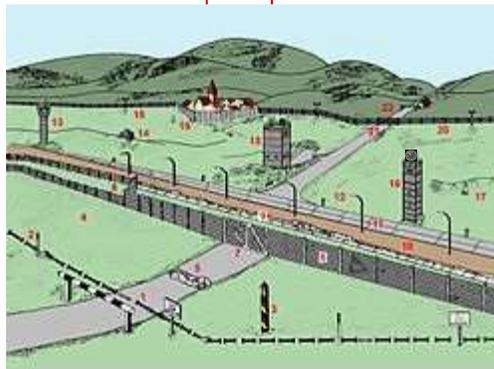


Diagram of East German border fortifications

Several steps were taken to reduce the amount of noise produced by the aircraft. The propellers, designed according to plans from the 1930s, already set to rotate at around 800 kmh, were prevented from going faster than the speed of sound, and the air inlets on the carburetors were also rotated 90°, and hidden in the chassis nacelles with the mufflers. The front wheels of the motorbikes, along with their brakes and suspension, were positioned here too. Air channels were created for cooling the cylinders. Before they attached the motorbike engines,

*Continued Page 4*

## Wagner DOWA 81 Continued

Udo and Jörg mounted one on the car trailer and used a spring balance between the car and the trailer to determine whether the thrust would be enough to power the aircraft.

Although the necessary materials (plywood, balsa wood, aluminium, plexiglass and polyester) were in short supply in East Germany, the family was able to procure them from various hobby shops, which they visited in a wide area around Dresden to prevent drawing attention to themselves. Wagner's mother-in-law, who lived in the West, was brought in on the plan and smuggled in glass, silk, bearings, and saw blades for cutting the aluminium sheets. The instruments needed for flight and navigation (altimeter, air-speed indicator and compass) were either built by Wagner, smuggled from the West, or purchased on the black market.

Wagner tested all the various elements of the aircraft in order to ensure it would successfully fly, including stress-testing the wing-fuselage connection with the aid of jacks and springs, showing that it could carry at least 2.4 times the intended weight.

### Discovery

Wagner intended to take off from an abandoned coal mine in Nonnewitz near Leipzig, as it was a good distance away from any public roads and buildings. He planned to assemble the aircraft in a nearby warehouse and use the track bed of the mine railway as the runway. At 600 metres long, it would be adequate for the aircraft, which required a runway of at least 450 metres. Following assembly of the aircraft, he would flight-test it before landing. His family would then board, and he would fly south, following the highway (keeping low so as to stay below the radar), and after a journey of round 90 kilometres (an estimated half hour flight), land in a field near Hof, West Germany.

Unknown to Wagner, the Stasi was spying on him. They carried out extensive checks and created a file about him, in addition to secretly searching and bugging his apartment and checking his mail. At least four unofficial Stasi employees were also assigned to him.

On July 25, 1981 at 7:00 AM, the day before the intended escape, the Stasi arrested Wagner and his family at their apartment. The family was sentenced to a total of twelve



years in prison for preparing to cross the border illegally. Wagner was sent to Brandenburg Prison, his wife to Hoheneck Women's Prison, and their three children to the Halle Juvenile Detention Centre. A year later, in July 1982, they were considered 'unwanted', and ransomed by the West. They moved to West Germany and settled in Kaiserslautern. Wagner established himself as an expert for packaging, whilst continuing to design gliders. In 2011, he was awarded the Oskar Ursinus Prize.



The aircraft was examined by the State Aviation Authority of the GDR, who determined that it was probably the smallest five-person aircraft in the world, and would have been able to fly for the required half hour the trip would have taken. It was kept in the evidence chamber of the Stasi in East Berlin until the Peaceful Revolution in 1989.

Initially, the aircraft was preserved at the Stasi Museum, before being transferred to Flugwerft Schleissheim in Munich in 1991. In 2023, Wagner permanently loaned the aircraft to the Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth in Mödlareuth.

### Similar attempts

Wagner's airplane was not the only attempt at escaping the Eastern bloc using a homemade aircraft. In 1973, an Armenian named Henrik Arakelyan attempted to flee Armenia in a homemade aircraft, only for it to crash. Three years after Wagner's arrest, in 1984, Ivo Zdarsky, future founder of Ivoprop, successfully escaped communist Czechoslovakia to Austria in a homemade powered hang glider, which used an engine from a Trabant.

*Continued Page 6*

# May Speakers — Thank you Mark Beeda for Photos



## Get Your Gen Aviation Plate

General Aviation Florida Specialty License Plate



**FLORIDA**

www.FloridaGeneralAviation.com

SUPPORT GENERAL AVIATION

**SIMPLE ORDERING STEPS**

1. Scan the QR code on the front
2. Scroll down to "How to Purchase the General Aviation (B8R) Plate"
3. Click on any one of the seven counties' Tax Collector DMV offices: Bay, Duval, Escambia, Hillsborough, Lee, Monroe or Orange.  
Note: You do not have to live in any of those counties to purchase your plate
4. Scroll down to the General Aviation plate pictured and click on the Purchase Box.
5. Enter your existing license plate number and complete the purchase with your credit or debit card.

## Dowa 81 Continued

### Specifications

#### General Characteristics

- Crew: 5
- Wingspan: 9.0 metres
- Length: 5.85 metres
- Wing area: 8.61 square metres
- Empty mass: 240 kilograms
- Take-off mass: 580 kilograms
- Wing load: 67 square metre

#### Performance

- Drive: Two 19 hp motorcycle engines
- Flight speed: max. 210 km/h
- Take-off distance: 450 metres
- Climb speed: 1.8 metres/second

## Joe Hurtuk Wins Die Cast

Sporty's **Aviation Gifts**

**MEET OUR NEXT CESSNA MODEL**

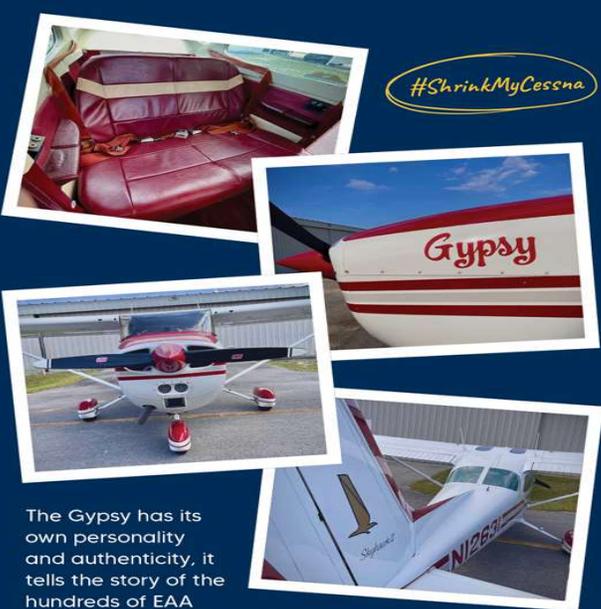
**WE HAVE A WINNER!**



*Our 2026 Cessna die-cast model!*

Congratulations to The Hurtuk family, Gypsy is the winner of our Cessna die-cast model contest!

*#ShrinkMyCessna*



The Gypsy has its own personality and authenticity, it tells the story of the hundreds of EAA Young Eagles who took their first flights in her, inspiring many to pursue careers in aviation.

## EAA Chapter 203

President	Stephen Sinclair
Vice President	Mark Beeda
Secretary	Eric Flaig
Treasurer	Bud Smith
Past President	Bill Perry
At-Large	Kevin Sheely
At-Large	Rick Golightly
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### Meetings

The Chapter normally meets monthly at 9:00 am on the second Saturday of each month at hangar 11250-5 at North County Airport. Guests are welcome to attend two meetings but are expected to join the Chapter at the third. Dues are \$35 per year.

### Notice

**A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL FREE 800-435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.**

### Newsletter

Contributions need to be in the editor's hands by the last Wednesday of the month preceding publication, unless the moon is full, in which case the deadline is the Thursday preceding the first Wednesday prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Editor's staff. **Be an Author!! Send us something.**

## Other Stuff

### Board of Directors Meeting

Please contact President Stephen Sinclair for time and place of each monthly meeting.

### Editor's Report

June 2025, Newsletter.  
117 Email Notifications Sent.

### Membership

38 Current Paid Members  
03 Honorary Members

### Advertising

Two and one-half column-inches costs \$5.00 per month. A half-page ad is \$15.00 per issue. Digital artwork or photos are preferred. Contact the editor for further details.

Chapter 203 members with email addresses on file will receive email notification of the link to the on-line edition of "Hangar Talk". Send your email address to the editor at Scott Thatcher, 423 SW Talquin Lane, Port Saint Lucie, Florida 34986. 561-818-0499 or sdthatcher@bellsouth.net

### Disclaimer

The content of this newsletter is provided for entertainment only. No claim is made, nor assurance given, for the accuracy of the material presented, nor do we verify anything before we print it. **Send rumors.**

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