

## Richard (Dick) Smith



The eldest member of EAA Chapter 595, he was born in the Pittsburgh Pa, area to August and Nellie Smith, a family of 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls. Dick is the father of 6 siblings from 2 families. He has been married to Dona for 17 years. They winter in Pharr, TX. and have a summer home in Creede Colorado. Dick was raised on a farm, attended a one room red brick school for 8 years, then to high school. At the age of 13, he wrote a paper on what I wanted to do in life. He took his first airplane ride in a bi- plane at the Pittsburgh Airport. He graduated high school May of 35 at the age of 17.

Soon after graduation he left for Tulsa Okla. to attend the Spartan School of Aero. In order to pay his tuition, he worked at their factory at night at \$.20 per hour. They were building the Experimental Spartan Executive. Before graduating from Mariners Course, he soloed in a Spartan C2. When he soloed the rate was \$6.00 per hour.

Dick hitch-hiked to several aircraft factories in the eastern part of the U.S., with no luck finding a job, he heard about C.G. Taylor starting a new venture to build his new "Taylorcraft". He and his partner separated and was trying to get CAA certification to manufacture his new design. He worked at the J.C. Penny store again, but hitchhiked to Alliance, Ohio, 125 miles away, every Saturday, until they finally gave in and hired him at \$10.00 per week. That was the fall of 1936. After certification of his 40 H.P Taylorcraft the factory began to organize and he was the primary assembly foreman.



A friend and Dick decided they could do better than Taylor, so they designed and started to build a low wing side by side. They had the fuselage tail finished and started one wing when he got laid off when production was cut back in 1938.

Later, they were re-united as he went back to TN., and started to dream up another plane design. I drove to TN. Every weekend. It was to be a 4-place staggered bi-plane similar to the Beechcraft. In 1939, he re-designed the Taylorcraft and moved to Knoxville to start the mercury BT 100 4-place.

It first flew Dec. 1939. Dick was the test pilot and they formed Mercury Aircraft Co. Time passed and after the war started in Europe, we decided to build a trainer model. After 2 more planes, we received certification to build the BT 120 and started production of the first 10 planes. When the Pearl Harbor attack occurred, that closed the airports and grounded everything. We ended up not being able to recover and closed down.

Dick then went to work for McDonald Aircraft in St. Louis and was hired to manage a new factory being built in Memphis TN, which was to build Boeing Bomber Trainer. He temporarily worked at Lambert Field Factory running production on some DC3 parts for Douglass Aircraft Co. After waiting to get in the Memphis plant, the VP informed him the airplane crashed and the crew did not survive.



The next venture he sought to be a Navy Recruiter. They offered him an Ensign comm. to take needed training as a navy flight instructor. He trained at 3 Navy bases and received his navy aviator wings on Nov. 13, 1943. Most of 1944 was spent in at the naval air station teaching cadets in Stearman's; next to Michigan and while in Detroit, he bought a Velie 3-cylinder powered Moncoupe with no brakes, no tail skid.

Dick was at several other Naval bases and when the Bomb was dropped on Japan and the war ended and for him to take his crew to the pacific for 18 months or get out of the navy.... at this point he chose to get out. 1945.

It appears that Mr. Richard Smith, is a true American, loves everything about flying and has so much experience he could write a book... He adds he had an airport that grew into The Smith Aeromotive.