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Rodney Stiff

Memories of David P Eyre

I first met David when I was coming back from Cairns in a Cessna. I got away from Cairns a bit late and hit a headwind all the way and had to land at Gladstone because I was running out of light. I was tying the plane down and David wandered over and asked me if I needed a lift into town. We chatted and he gave me a lift to town and that was the first time I met him.

After that I heard about him test flying for Geoff Fenton who was the manufacturer of Drifters at Boonah. David nearly come to grief test flying a drifter on floats which managed to tip up on landing and had David trapped in his harness upside down in water but he survived that one.

After that I next heard about him test flying for Don Adams on the Seabird project at Hervey Bay. I met him a couple of times there. He did a lot of work test flying the Seabird Seeker with its many different engines. He did a lot of spin testing on that one as well.

Anyway, he turned up in Bundaberg. He was in competition with one of our customers Hagen for the attentions of a lady. It was then that he was flying Jabirus for the 2 blokes in the hanger where Leisure Build is now, Heavy Kevie and Chris Myles. They had a flying school with a couple of Jabirus and David ended up working for them as an instructor.

Then, I can't remember the exact details but he badly needed an aeroplane of his own and we helped him get into 875 which was from North Queensland Aero Club. We got that plane down here and helped him financially get into that and that began the life of 875 here in Bundaberg. It put up nearly 8,000 hours of training while here in Bundaberg under the command of David P Eyre and dramatically revived the aeroclub in Bundaberg which was near extension when David became involved and set up his flying school. He brought the club back from the brink of extinction and made it a good social club and flying club and David and Winifred his dog became key members here for many years.

David being of course an experienced test pilot, was number one favourite for doing the preliminary certifying testing on the Jabiru UL project. We were certifying our Jabiru UL for the US market so it was duly fitted with a spin recovery shoot and David fitted with a parachute and we launched him. David successfully completed a number of spins before he struck one that didn't what to recover. I was flying the chase plane and David was spinning away. He had to deploy the spin recovery chute which worked very effectively and he was able to fly back to the airport safely. Mind you he lost a bit of sweat in it and shortly after that he had a minor heart attack which he blamed on our spin testing. I imagine the stress levels were fairly high in the cockpit as he was spinning towards the earth, however the spin recovery chute saved the day.

He worked on then for many years with 875. He produced many recreational pilots and many career pilots. Some who he trained found their way into the military or the airlines and no doubt many of them will have good things to say about David. He was through and through an aviator. He cared not for material things. He was just a dedicated aviator.

We celebrated his 50 years of aviation over East Bundaberg where he gave all the attendees a fifty-cent coin wrapped up in a picture of him wearing his instructors gold bars. I was a good night and every one enjoyed themselves.

As I say, he didn't care about material things he just cared about aviation, that was David through and through, he cared about people, he cared about aviation and his dog and later on, his girlfriend/wife Angela.

*David passed away on 28 January 2020 at the age of 85 after a long illness.*



David Eyre flying 55-1875 performed in the Jabirettes Formation Flying Group at the Air Show in Bundaberg 2005.

