

The Bath Air Force, Part One:

Wayne Woolard



Wayne Woolard tells Ronnie Godley about his ultralight plane.

Article by Ronnie Godley

INTRODUCTION

On a windy, early fall day Mr. Armstrong, Gwen Alligood, and I drove to historic Bath. The place of interest was a waterfront lot on the beautiful Bath Creek. We were greeted by Wayne Woolard, the owner of the lot. Wayne is also the owner of Wayne's Tree Service in Washington. Wayne is in his late twenties, has brown hair, brown eyes, and weighs about one hundred, fifty pounds. His physical fitness is due to his physical activeness.

He is a man of many talents concerning water sports. Wayne can do anything from barefoot water-skiing and boat racing to flying an ultralight plane. The purpose of our trip for Life on the Pamlico was to talk to Wayne about his ultralight airplane. An ultralight is a combination between a plane and a hang glider. It takes a person, like Wayne, with nerve, talent, and a special love of adventure to fly this incredible piece of machinery.

Life: What I called you about is this little magazine we do, Life on the Pamlico. These two students are taking journalism, and I thought the story about your plane would really be interesting. I was out there with Bob French, who lives on the Creek, and you were out there flying this thing and then Warren Smith came blasting over in his plane. Bob said, "We got the Bath

Creek Air Force!" I think that's what he called it. So we decided to do a story about the Bath Creek Air Force! What we'd like to know first is what kind of plane is this thing and what's it designed to do.

Wayne: It's a Quicksilver MX made by Eipper; they're the largest ultralight aircraft manufacturer in the world. This particular model is the workhorse of the industry. It is the safest ultralight that's ever been built. It's got the best safety record of all of them; it comes from the factory a lot different than the way this one is. It comes from the factory with a 377 Cauhna engine, which is anywhere from 30 to 35 horsepower. This is a 46 horse power Rotax. It's the best two-cycle engine you can buy. Of course, naturally, if you're putting it in an airplane, that's what you'd want, even though you don't have to have it to fly.

It's got a ballistic parachute. I have a control center here that I stick on this vario. Pull the pin out of the bottom, push the button, and it fires this rocket. The rocket comes out, drags the parachute out, and it brings the whole plane down. If you ever had a problem, it takes one and a quarter seconds to deploy the 'chute to inflate. It takes about seventy feet for it to work. They say if you're two hundred feet up, when you come down, you'll hit normal. If you're up a hundred feet, you're going to hit hard. Most of the time if I'm pier-hopping, I'm flying three or four hundred feet. The ceiling on the plane is fifteen thousand feet without the pontoons, twelve thousand

feet with the pontoons.

Life: Wayne explained that he put pontoons on instead of the standard wheels so that he can land on water.

Wayne: When it comes from the factory, you have wheels here instead of pontoons. It's been converted for floats. All I do is I back the plane down into the water. I do a preflight on it first and back it into the water, fire it up, and you got a lot of places around here to land.

Life: How much distance would it take you to land with the wheels on it?

Wayne: With the wheels on it, take off is fifty feet. Landing is shorter. It takes you, probably, forty feet to touch and stop because this thing flies extremely slow. Top speed on it is 61 m.p.h.; it stalls at about 25.

Life: How about landing on the water?

Wayne: The manual says 75 feet [on the water], but it's shorter! With one person it's more like 50 feet, very, very short distance. There, again, it depends on the wind. These are no wind conditions. You have wind; like if I was to go out right now and take off going in this wind, I'd probably be up in 30 feet.

Life: Is that right!

Wayne: Yes. It's very, very fast. Very quick.

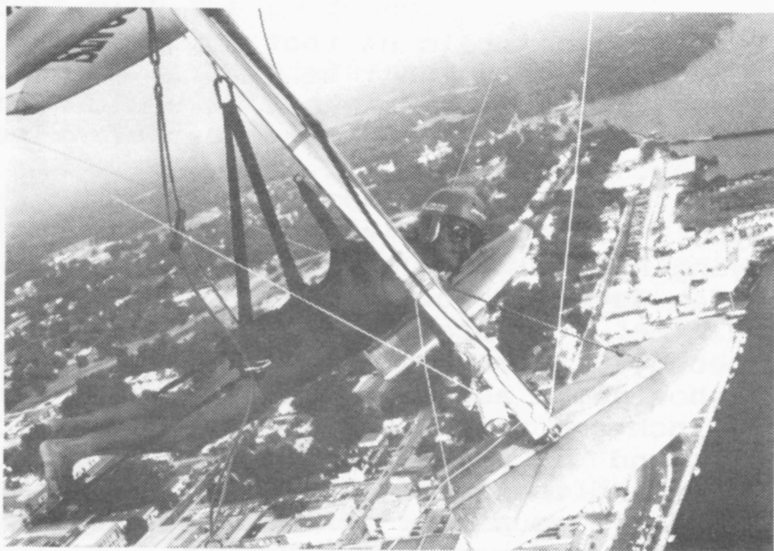
Life: Wayne told us that a windy day, like today, wouldn't be favorable for his ultralight plane, but it would be good for hang gliders, another of his hobbies.

Wayne: Today would be a super day for flying hang gliders. It would be a good tandem day. We could fly two people at the time. In other words, I could take somebody with me. We tow them up behind the boat with about 6500 feet of rope on a winch and stand on the bulkhead down here and it pops you right off. You just stand there and the boat takes off, goes out a couple of hundred feet, locks the winch and you just take off.

When we went to New York this summer and flew around the Statue of Liberty, we had wind, but it wasn't in our favor, because where we were taking off and landing, the wind was at our back and our side. So if we hadn't been experienced hang glider pilots, we couldn't have flown

Life: What kind of boat do you use for launching your hang gliders and for skiing?

Wayne: My boat is a special-made boat that was made for Cypress Gardens. I got it when I skied at Sea World back in '78. It's painted up just like an Executioner, and it has Executioner upholstery and all that in it, because I use it to entertain a lot of clients over at Fountain Powerboats [where the famed Executioners are made]. Plus Reggie [Fountain] skis with me every afternoon.



Wayne, on hang glider, over Washington, N. C.

Life: Do you think that the Executioner is about the best boat for speed and that kind of thing that you can get?

Wayne: Well, they're always having performance reports and everybody sends their boats and Fountain always comes up on top on all categories.

Life: Getting back to your plane, is it mainly just for pleasure?

Wayne: You don't have to have a license to fly it.

Life: You couldn't take a very long trip in it, could you?

Wayne: Oh, yes! People have flown them from California to Kitty Hawk.

Life: Is that right!

Wayne: Yes. What I usually do is, like, I'll take off and fly from here up to Washington and then down to Pamlico Beach. Maybe over to Belhaven and back. Something like that.

Life: At what altitude do you like to fly?

Wayne: I like to fly at 300-400 feet, because you can see well. And then, like, if you're pier-hopping, you see somebody you know, you can just stop. Just land right in and talk. The way you learn to fly one of these with the pontoons is what I was doing [pier-hopping]. I have so many hours in hang gliders, when I bought this, I just took it out and taxied it around for maybe five to ten minutes, took off, landed, and just flew it to Bath.

Life: Wayne told us that he bought the plane from a friend.

Wayne: I bought it from Jim O'Brien. He bought it new. And when I got it, it had 36 hours on it. I bought it from him. He enjoyed it, but I think his wife decided that they were going to move off the river. So I know the boat went up for sale, his house, and this ultralight all at the same day. They

say women can do that to you. I don't know.

Life: I guess it depends on the woman.

Wayne: I guess.

Life: What kind of price range are you talking about with this plane?

Wayne: This plane right here was \$10,600. You have to consider you can buy the plane without the pod, without the altimeter, vertical speed indicator, compass, air speed indicator, ballistic parachute, strobe lights, none of that, no pontoons, for about \$6500-\$6800. But you add another \$1200 for the ballistic 'chute or rocket-propelled 'chute. You have an engine that's about \$1800 dollars. That's not the one that came on it; it has more horsepower. The pontoons are about \$2000. Strobe light, it's about \$200-\$300. The pod and all that up there is about \$600. It just adds up. And, of course, you have a dolly to pull it in and out of the water with. It's expensive.

Life: Well, you could hardly do anything good with a stripped-down version.

Wayne: Not really. Not and really feel safe.

Life: Always a worry is running out of gas. What do you do if that happens?

Wayne: If it quits, you just glide it down. It's got five to one ratio flying. As a matter of fact, one of the things you do when you first get them is

learn how to dead stick them in. You just go up and get set up and cut the engine off. Of course, if you cut it off yourself, then you're just gliding around. Like, if I was up 7000-8000 feet, I'd just cut the engine off and just fly around real quiet and silent. And if I want to start it, I just pull the pull cord and start it again.

Life: Wayne showed Gwen how to be properly seated in the plane. He discussed the controls.



Wayne explains the operation of the ultralight to Gwen Alligood. Ronnie Godley looks on.

Wayne: [Plane starts.] I hadn't started this thing in a couple of weeks or so. It's very comfortable. Most comfortable chair you ever sat in. The way you get in it is, you can't put your feet down here, so if the pontoon was here, it would be very easy to get into because you'd stick your bottom in first and slide over, just like this. And you sit. This is your control. This is your throttle. You have your cylinder [temperature gauge]; it's 75 degrees out here right now. Something I've noticed about this cylinder head temperature gauge is that it also tells you the temperature outside when the engine's not running. And this is your air speed indicator. It makes this little wheel spin, and it goes up and down. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to start it up. And after I get it started, I'll go over just as if you were getting ready to take off yourself.

Life: How do you determine your altitude?

Wayne: You've got an altitude gauge. What you do is turn your fuel on. Then the fuel starts to go in. It hasn't been run too much so it might take a few pulls to get it primed. You always yell "clear the prop" unless you're standing here looking at it. If you're in the pilot seat, you can't see behind you. You can turn around and look, but you've got your mind on other things. So you always yell "clear" first. [Starts plane again.] Okay, you notice I have the strobe lights blinking. The reason I have that, and I run it all the time,

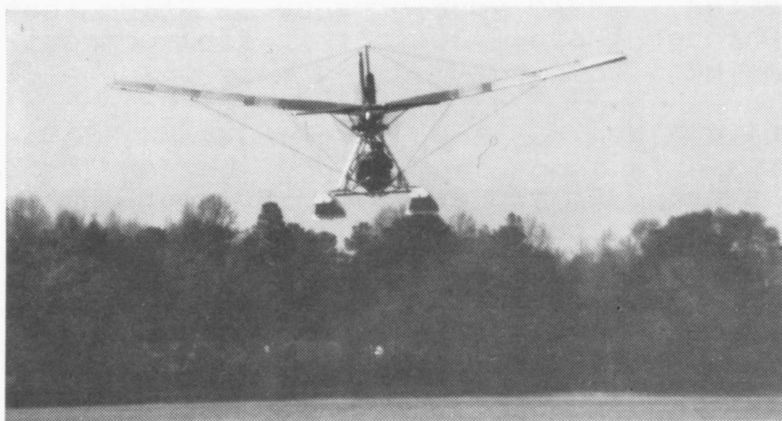
is because these jets from Cherry Point come smoking through here. This is a run for them, and they use this creek to set up a bombing run. They use Dr. Miller's house down here as a target, and I was almost run over about five years ago. So now when I fly this, I use the strobe lights.

Life: Like you say, it's better to be safe.

Wayne: Well, I'm running the strobe lights, I've got a ballistic 'chute, I pick my days when I fly. I'm as careful as you can be. You want to try it?

Life: Wayne showed us the total procedure to fly the plane.

Wayne: First thing is you pull your pin out of the bottom and push a button on top and it goes "beep." That lets you know this thing is on because there's a button here you push and it shoots the rocket out. So you push it back in, and



Pier-hopping

you know that's set. Now, what you're going to do is you're going to stand up here and just kind of slide your butt back in the seat. There you go. Put your feet right there on those pedals. All right, we're going to go through the whole route here. These are actually scuba diving belts; the reason I have them is because they hold real secure, but they're easy to get out of. Then you can get out of them faster than a regular seat belt.

Life: There's really no need to have a parachute, is there? You're usually not high enough for a regular parachute, are you?

Wayne: You can [use one] if you're high enough flying. You can use any kind of parachute. But you need one big enough to take you and the plane because you want to stay with the plane because the plane creates drag coming down. Okay, when you zip, put this up, you want to make sure that you're not around your stick. Hold your arms up. Stick that through there. Doesn't it feel comfortable?

Life: Yes.

Wayne: So you are set. Do your shoulders feel comfortable?

Life: Yes.

Wayne: Okay, so you are set there. You know your engines right before you take off because you're already done a pre-flight. You've gone around and looked at all the nuts and bolts on the plane

and the wires and things like that. You have two things here. You have cylinder head temperature, which measures heat in the engine. You push this top button, and it tells you what it is. It says 105 degrees. All right, the minimum you can take off with is 120 degrees. It doesn't take it but a very short while to get to 120 degrees. It usually runs about 290 to 300 degrees; that's at 4400-4600 rpm's. So you just switch them back and forth while you're in flight.

Okay, you've got your fuel on, and, like I said, this is your throttle right here. You want to make sure the throttle cable is going all the way down to the stock when it goes backwards. One thing you can't do with a two-cycle engine, you can't let it idle very long or it will load up. Do you know what I mean by load up? It starts missing, smoking, whatever. It's going to smoke in a two-cycle engine because you mix the gas and oil together.

So you [Gwen] feel two pedals. If you mash the right pedal while you're flying, that flap's going to move and it's going to make the wing drop, which is going to make you turn to the right some. Now, put your hand on this; okay, look behind you. That controls the rudder. See it moving up and down?

Life: Yes.

Wayne: See your rudder in the back? Left and right. Elevators and rudders left and right, up and down. You move them all at the same time by that stick. That's your control right there. So you're ready to go. So you take your

switch, which is off. It's on. Throttle is back. You want to put your cylinder head temperature right. [Starts plane again.]

So if you're in the water on those pontoons, you take off and you land almost entirely backwards from the way you would if you're on the land. The reason is that if you were taxiing out in the water and you're getting ready to take off, you'd pull this all the way back from the very beginning. That makes the front of the pontoons get up so that the water doesn't come and hit you. It makes the front end get up, and you just pull it all the way back, keep it straight, give it all the gas. You'll start to climb out. After you've climbed up maybe 500-600 feet, then you pull back on the throttle easily.

This is your rate of climb. It tells you how many feet a minute you're going up. So what I usually do is when it gets 500 feet up, I don't go any more than 500 feet up. I usually go about 400 feet a minute up. That's a good rate of climb. It also tells you how fast you're coming down. See, this tells you if it's a level flight. This tells you how high you are. This is your altimeter. This is your compass. It tells you the direction you're flying. And, of course, this tells you how level you are. As you can see, we're not level because this pontoon is off on this side. The paddle is so that if you land out in the river and you need to get somewhere. It's hard to paddle this thing too.

Life: Have you ever had to do that, Wayne?

Wayne: Once. I didn't have to, but I did, just to see how it was going to handle.

Life: What are these pedals here?

Wayne: They're flaps. Mash the right pedal. See that flap on the top up there. All right, now let it come back. Push back with your heel. See it come down?

Life: Yes.

Wayne: It's an aid for turning. It also is like brakes. You hit both of them at the same time, and the plane will drop. Say, I've got to make an emergency landing or something. And I'm coming in and I have too much altitude and I've got a real small area to put it down. I just push both flaps at the same time. The plane's going to drop down. Then I put them back up and keep my speed so I won't stall. It's just air brakes is what it is. And you can brake it one side or the other, right or left.

Life: She [Gwen] looks like she's ready to go, doesn't she?

Wayne: Yes!

CONCLUSION

After this engrossing conversation with Wayne Woolard, I have gained much information about not only an ultralight but the techniques of flying it also. Our visit was really an enlightening

experience.

Owning an ultralight requires right much money initially, but it doesn't take that much to operate it. The number of options determines the price. Wayne pointed out to us that most of the necessary options are for safety, such as a ballistic 'chute and a strobe light to alert other planes. Wayne has many options because he wants to feel safe while flying.

Operating an ultralight is fairly cheap. The plane is transported on a trailer. The pontoons allow it to be docked like a boat. The two-stroke engine consumes very little gas. A pilot's license is not required to fly an ultralight. These economic advantages add to the enjoyment.

Wayne advised that anyone wanting to fly an ultralight should first begin with a hang glider. After mastering the hang glider, you can more easily learn to operate the ultralight. Then you can enjoy everything from taxiing like a boat, pier-hopping, to dead-sticking in the air.

It was really great talking to Wayne, a man who has spent most of his life on or near the water. I found that he thoroughly enjoys his ultralight. He thinks of it as a challenge as well as enjoyment.

