

## Feb. 2, 2013 - EAA Fly-in breakfast at Titusville, FL

On the first Saturday of each month, come rain or shine, the EAA Chapter 866 holds a fly-in all you can eat breakfast at the Albert Dunn Airpark in the Titusville/Spacecoast area. I try to make this event every few months. It was a beautiful crisp winter day, and cool enough for me to wear my leather flight jacket, when I arrived after fighting headwinds for the past hour and a half. This field is an operational base for one of the big sky diving operations in Florida and there is always the opportunity to view as a half dozen parachutist descend from 18,000 feet and land just adjacent to their main runway. Once there I found newly elected president of this Smilin' Jack Chapter, Debra VanTueuen in her customary position at the outside grill... flippin' eggs.!

I have known Deb, and her husband Richard for a dozen or more years, through my association with the Volkswagen Club of America. We all have owned, or currently own VW's and I get to see them both each year when we hold our annual convention somewhere in the eastern half of the US. This year's event will be at Volkswagen's new Passat plant in Chattanooga, TN, but unfortunately Deb will not be able to attend. She will instead be at the big EAA Airventure Expo in Oshkosh, WI. recovering wing control surfaces for the B-17 bomber that the organization owns.

I only found out that Deb was both a pilot and EAA member at last year's convention in Rockford, IL when she casually happened to mention it to me. Since then I have been over to their home close to the Daytona Beach area a couple of times to check on the progress they are making in building an experimental airplane in their dome house's downstairs utility room. They were originally going to do the build in their garage until they realized that this would relegate their two VW's to the cruel outside world of the north Florida winter.

The plane that they are building is a kit offered by a Belgium based company and theirs is one of only a handful now in the US. It is of composite material, which makes it light, sleek and very fast. It will easily cruise at 1 1/2 times the speed of mine with no worse fuel consumption. While it is slow going, they are hopeful to have it completed by the end of this year. Rich is now retired from NASA where he assisted in keeping the shuttle program running until it's recent demise at the end of last year. He was an electronics specialist and his experiences with the shuttle gives him excellent credentials in building an experimental, as does Deb's work with her EAA projects. Rich's other love is his research into the history of the Airship. He has published several papers on this subject and is very active in this small but active cadre of enthusiasts. He is currently trying to gain FAA re-acceptance for the use of the vastly more economical and easily obtainable hydrogen gas in lighter than air balloon vessels than the very scarce and costly helium, now the norm. Just the mention of this subject will have Rich go into a 15 minute tirade on how asinine current FAA regulations are when exposed to the truth about the so called hazard's of using hydrogen gas.

After breakfast I climbed into my plane for the 20 minute flight north to the Massey Airpark where I was picked up by Deb for a chance to see the progress being made on their Twister airplane.



Flight line parking with parachutists descending



EAA Chapter Pres. Deborah Van T, flippin' eggs



I was a recipient of those eggs, and pancakes.



Debbie and Richard and their Twister home built undergoing construction in their utility room