

# Pocahontas pilot re-enacts historic first flight

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**POCAHONTAS** — One hundred years ago, on a sandy shoreline in poor weather, Orville Wright became the first man to fly in a powered aircraft. Wednesday, a Pocahontas man plowed snow, not sand, off his runway and took to the air as a tribute to the bicycle makers from Ohio.

Larry Vetter began to think about the contributions of Orville and Wilbur Wright about a month ago. Vetter, a longtime pilot and former president of the Humboldt Flying Club, was impressed with how his life mirrored that of the Wrights.

Vetter and his brother Dennis slaved for more than six months to build a TEAM miniMAX ultralight made of fabric and cloth just as the Wright brothers did in 1903. The first flight for the Vetter brothers was Dec. 5, 1988. Unlike the coastal view witnessed by Orville in his first flight, the Vetter brothers thrilled at the view from Manson as they also thrilled that their aircraft flew — probably not unlike the feeling felt in Kitty Hawk in 1903.

“Their accomplishment is re-

ally incredible when you look at what they did a hundred years ago. Their flight on Dec. 17, 1903, made my flight on Dec. 17, 2003, possible,” said Vetter.

Vetter said that both aircrafts had open cockpits. The Vetters’ plane weighed 250 pounds, 350 pounds less than the Wright brothers’ plane. The Wright brothers’ aircraft had a 15-horsepower engine. The Vetters’ craft nearly doubled that at 28 horses.

The Wright brothers plane used wing warping to go up and down, whereas the Vetter plane uses ailerons, control surfaces at the rear of the wings, that go up and down to turn the plane.

The biggest difference between the two sets of brothers was in the duration of their flight. The Wright brothers flew for 12 seconds. Wednesday, Vetter flew for just over a half hour before the winds came up and he decided to land.

Ironically, although Vetter flew two hours later than his predecessors, he was still closer than the crew at Kitty Hawk trying to re-enact the flight using a replica plane. By afternoon, that plane was still on the ground due to weather.



**LARRY VETTER** lands on his runway Wednesday after re-enacting the Wright brothers’ historic flight. -Submitted photo