

Larry Vetter commemorates Wright Brothers' historic flight

A hundred years ago on December 17, 1903, the Wright Brothers made history by making the first powered flight. About a month ago, Larry Vetter, rural Manson, started to think about celebrating the Wright Brothers' accomplishment by planning a flight of his own on the anniversary date, weather permitting.

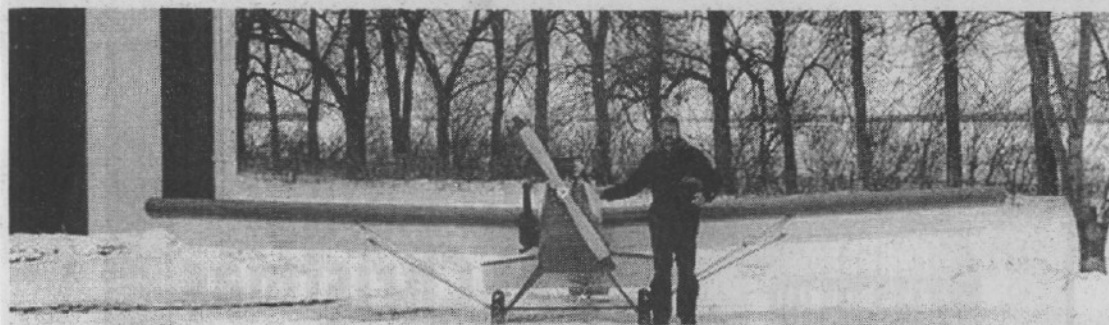
As a licensed pilot and an ultralight pilot, Larry admits he really never gave the Wright Brothers' accomplishment a lot of thought until recently with all the talk of the historic day.

It was a calm, cold morning last Wednesday, when Larry removed the snow to get to his runway. Putting a little gas in his

plane, wanting his flight to last longer than 12 seconds, he took off in his miniMAX ultralight approximately 10:30 a.m.

Larry comments, "In 1903 the Wrights would have beaten me by nearly two hours. As I flew for a little more than half an hour, I began to wonder

•Larry Vetter
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Larry Vetter is shown with the small ultralight plane (top photo) he flew to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' historic flight. Vetter is featured in the bottom photo taking off on the special flight.

Photos by Jane Vetter

•Larry Vetter
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about some of the similarities and differences in the Wright Brothers airplane and my ultralight."

In comparing the planes, both were built of wood and fabric, both were open cockpit, and one special similarity for Larry is the fact that he had a part in building his own plane just as the Wright Brothers had. Then there are a lot of differences. The Wrights' plane weighed 600 pounds, Larry's plane weighs 250 pounds. The Wrights' engine put out about 15 horsepower, Larry's Rotax engine puts out 28 horsepower. Larry says his ultralight is much more controllable than the Wrights' first plane.

He states, "The Wrights could control their machine in roll, pitch, and yaw, which is still the way all flying machines are controlled today. The Wrights used wing warping or twisting to help roll their machine; my ultralight has ailerons (control surfaces mounted at the rear of the wings that move in opposite directions to roll the plane left or right) for roll control."

He continues, "Their accomplishment is really incredible when you look at what they did a hundred years ago. Their flight on December 17, 1903, made my flight on December 17, 2003, possible."

The ultralight TEAM miniMAX was built by Larry and his brother, Dennis, in 1988, taking a good six months to build. Its first flight was on December 5, 1988, or 84 years 11 months and 18 days after the Wright brothers first flew.