

10-FT. WINGS STAY IN PLACE ON ROAD

Are You Ready For A Flying Car?

Flying cars have been on the drawing board since the late 1800's, but none have ever reached the marketplace.

Now, unless regulatory wrangling interferes, the first-ever flying automobile may soon be on the market. Texas designer Ken Wernicke has successfully tested scale models of his Aircar in Texas A&M University's wind tunnel. He's also built a mock-up of the vehicle to drive around.

"We're ready to build actual working models, but we don't have the \$3 million we need to do that yet," says Wernicke, a retired aircraft engineer. "We're looking for sponsorship.

"I've been thinking about a vehicle like this since 1965, but didn't start developing it seriously until 1992. I've envisioned it primarily for urbanites or for undeveloped areas not easily accessible by road, so it would probably have useful agricultural applications as well."

Wernicke's streamlined single-piece construction uses stubby wings with big vertical fins, called upper winglets, and a short 10-ft. wingspan. That's so it can drive down the road in the same configuration it flies in.

Lower winglets house the vehicle's wheels.

Upper and lower winglets increase the

wings' cruise efficiency when airborne, experts say.

Wernicke's four-passenger Aircar would be powered by a 475 hp V8 race car engine. It would have a top airspeed of 266 mph. Air range would be 600 miles.

The car's steering wheel controls the nose wheel when on the ground. In the air, it controls ailerons and elevators, same as on all aircraft.

The transmission has forward, reverse and parking gears. The propeller locks in a horizontal position when on the road. Wheel drives are powered by a hydraulic pump on the engine.

Expected gross weight is 2,800 lbs., comparable to any other light aircraft.

Compared with a couple of other flying car designs, Wernicke's holds the most potential for success, according to Carl Gillis, a Saskatchewan farmer-pilot and author of "Plane Farming," a column in the Canadian farm magazine *Grainews*.

"In my opinion, the Aircar is the closest thing to a workable air car anyone has ever come up with," Gillis says. "Unlike one designed in 1949 and based on a small automobile, this one's in one piece so there are no wings, fuselage and tail assembly to clamp on and take off, which made that design impractical. It's also a lot less com-



Wernicke's Aircar has a short 10-ft. wingspan. Top air speed will be 266 mph.

plex than another air car currently under development. That one's powered by four fan engines, making it cost-prohibitive to the average person."

However, Gillis also foresees a couple of problems with any air car, including Wernicke's.

"Government bureaucrats would absolutely tear their hair out trying to figure out who should register and license it - the motor vehicle department, the FAA, or some other agency," he says. Plus, insur-

ance companies will likely take a dim view of an air car, so cost of insuring it could be prohibitive, he adds.

Nevertheless, Gillis bets Wernicke's aerodynamic design will fly - and fly well. "I suspect it will fly far better than most people believe," he concludes.

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John Spanbauer's dance hall barn is a big hit around Twin Falls, Idaho.

"IT'S A REAL CROWD PLEASER FOR THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD"

Old-Time Dance Hall Housed In Restored Barn

Every Saturday night for the last few years folks have come from all directions to the John Spanbauer farm near Twin Falls, Idaho, to dance to the beat of country western or ballroom music in an old 40 by 50-ft. barn with a dance-floor hayloft.

Spanbauer and his wife Marie have spent 5 years entertaining people at the barn. They also run a 1,400-acre farm with sugarbeets, potatoes, hay, and small grains.

"Our dance hall barn is a real crowd pleaser for the entire neighborhood," says the 76-year-old Spanbauer.

It took five years of work to restore the old barn and convert the hayloft into a 900-sq. ft. dance floor. The dance floor is surrounded by chairs and tables that seat 120 people.

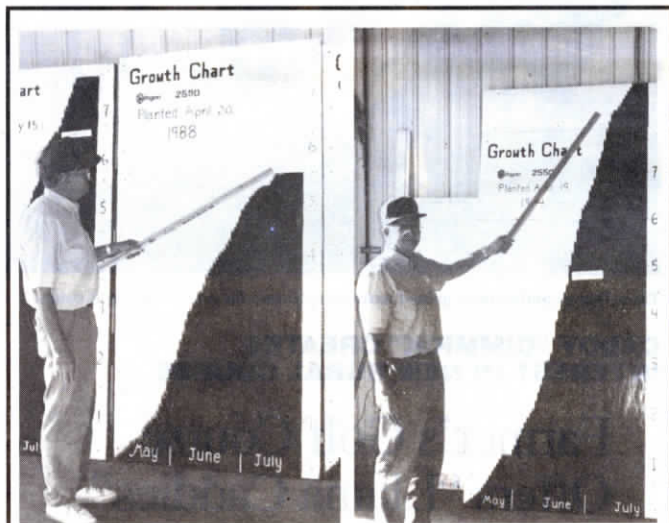
No hard liquor is allowed in the barn. Beer, sodas and food are on a bring-your-own basis. Some dancers show up with mini-coolers and bags of snacks. "This is

the old-style Saturday night barn dance," says Spanbauer. "The average couple that comes here is about 50 years old. It appeals to them because it takes them back to their time."

Spanbauer had to jack the barn up straight and reinforce the hayloft with posts. He bought hardwood for the dance floor from a minister who was remodeling a church and put in extra windows and a restroom on the ground floor. He built an inside stairway leading up to the hayloft and an outside stairway for emergency exits. A pair of old furnaces, one on each side, heat the barn.

The Spanbauers recently sold their farm to a large dairy operation that plans to milk over 4,000 cows.

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He Charts Corn Growth Every Day

How fast does corn grow, and which days does it grow the fastest? Which days does it stall out? Minnesota farmer and Keltgen Seed dealer Ellsworth Sather can tell you the answers to those questions for every day of the season. Sather, who along with his brother Dave grows about 1,000 acres of corn near Franklin, started a unique hobby in 1979 - measuring the daily growth of corn. Each spring he selects a single plant from his variety test plot. Then each morning at 6:15 he measures the growth of that plant until it quits growing, usually in early August. Wife Pat charts the daily growth on 4 by 10-ft. plywood sheets in easy-to-read black and white. Sather can tell you all about the tremendous daily impact of weather on corn growth. He agrees with agronomists that super-hot days hurt, not help, crop growth. One surprising conclusion is that there's zero growth for at least two or three days after heavy winds. Apparently, tiny rootlets tear loose if the wind pushes the corn plant around too much and it takes a few days for it to recover. Pictured here (left) is Sather's 1988 chart which reflects the severe heat and drought of that season. Note that the corn grew only about 5 1/2 ft. tall. Then in 1994 Keltgen 2550 topped out at 9 ft. (right).