

This is my reply to the NEWS of Quicksilver ceasing production.
October 23, 2015

With the recent news of Quicksilver Aeronautics ceasing production of the Quicksilver line I feel compelled to state my opinion on this action.

First, a brief background on our association with the Quicksilver Product. Kim (my wife) and I have been building, flying and peddling the "Quicksilver" product since 1977. The owner at that time was Steve Wilson and the product was a modified hang glider with a 8 HP engine. There were no fixed comfortable seats, no rudder pedals, no elevator control, no trim tabs...only a wing, a tail and a flimsy harness that you strapped into. To engage flight you started the cantankerous 2 stroke engine, picked up the 65 lb craft, pointed into the wind, ran like your ass was on fire and prayed that you didn't trip on anything that would cause a forced aborted takeoff that would result into a face first splat. No landing gear, no brakes, no instruments, no ailerons, no elevator, no pilot protection. Rudder control cable was string. This was bare bones "you had to want it bad to do it" freedom of flight. Typically while standing with the "Quicksilver" resting on your shoulders and pointed into the wind you knew that there was only a 50/50 shot at a successful launch. We were young, strong and the concept of being hurt hadn't been invented yet. It was not uncommon for a full load of fuel to be 1 quart and the flight endurance to be well over an hour. Our runway (literally, as we ran to take off) was any field that didn't have a fence. After a day's flight the engine was removed, the wing and tail were folded and stowed into a 16' long X 5' tall storage bag. After securing on the top of the van the day's flight was over. We had zero intervention with the "real" aviation community. Life was good.

The adaptation of the landing gear (wheels) was as celebrated as when the pocket was added to the front of the shirt. It was a game changer as now those not capable of reaching takeoff speed with their sneakers at full throttle could now relax a bit and let Goodyear do the work.

In 1979 a young firefighter from Florida met us at a fly-in at Tullahoma, Tennessee. In his car was a go cart seat that was attached to a steel tube and on it was a butterfly type steering wheel.

This contraption was the birth of the Quicksilver MX (Multi Axis) and Quicksilver was never going to be the same again.

By now the company was run by a very successful Cessna dealer from West Texas. His team comprised of several of the original pioneers and some new blood that brought the company into the realm of volume production. The goal at this time was to initiate a comprehensive QC & QA program, a grueling (Cessna style) testing regimen and the relentless goal of producing a fine finished "factory look" product that was designed and engineered to be a rugged long term product. The public has no idea on the amount of money and man hours that were spent developing the Quicksilver phenomenon. The thousands of man hours utilized in engineering, design & testing. A crew of test pilots that were given task cards every day to back the physical flight testing from the R & D shop. Automated testing devices that were designed and utilized to cycle all the moving parts so that the engineers would know exactly how many times a pivot point could cycle till failure. Just the number of file cabinets that store the insane amount of documentation is staggering at first sight.

The concept of "Quicksilver" didn't just happen. It was a combined effort of many folks from many backgrounds dedicated to the concept of uncomplicated simplified flight. I personally have logged over seven thousand hours of flight in these aircraft. The sport has always had a hard time with it's identity. Being the spawn from the cliff dwellers they called us Powered Hang gliders, an early meeting with Paul Poberezny, the founder of EAA, in 1978 or 79, he acknowledge the activity as Microlights, the reporter with 60 Minutes called us Dam Fools flying in Lawn Chairs, ambulance drivers called us Job Security, the FAA finally decided we would be called Ultralight Vehicles (part 103) and then finally today the "ultralight" with two seats are called Light Sport Planes. Even today at many airports the managers do not want to call us "tenants".

I've always felt like an unwanted stepchild, one that was not exactly sure who really wanted to associate with us. The search for innovative materials and products was a never ending project in deceit. There was no factory that sold wheels for "ultralights" we had to secretly utilize the products from other industries. We were never able to disclose what the real purpose was for buying the dacron fabric, the aluminum tubing, the S.S. cable or the small 2 stroke engines. Machine shops would rather machine a hole into the side of their head than make a part for a Flying Lawn chair company. To say it was difficult to be successful is a huge understatement.

For three plus decades I've sat in the left seat of the two place Quicksilver's bringing the elusive Quicksilver "smile" to many faces. I believe it to be that "smile, that grin" of "holy shit that was fun" is what keeps me going today. The excitement comes from first time young aviators as well as seasoned professional "real airplane" pilots. This is real flying not the complex successful management of a cockpit. The wind in our face is still our only required instrument. How simple is that? I've never ever wore a hat with the words "pilot" on it. I've always felt more to be "blessed" than a manipulator of the controls that defy gravity. Being able to participate in 3 dimensional travel and view the planet as it was given to us by our creator is an inner experience to be shared and not a title to be boasted. The words of this paragraph are from my keyboard but I know for a fact that the sentiments of many dedicated "sport flying" people are the exact same. I know I am not alone in this. For me, my family and aviation friends the word "Quicksilver" is not just a product, it is and has been a way of life.

I guess I'm not very good at being brief but this is as brief as I can be on such an important issue. If you've taken the time to read this far you obviously have nothing better to do and I want the history to be known.

To date the "product" has gone thru several owners and a multitude of company names. Each new owner has had their own idea on the product direction. The product philosophy is still as it was designed in the early 80's. In fact there is still one part of the new Quicksilver Sport 2S SLSA airframe that was used on the very early weight shift aircraft. It's apparent that most modern day business models do not fit the unique nature of the Ultralight and Sport Aircraft industry.

Our company, Air-Tech, Inc is a hands on operation that has been providing knowledgeable customer service, product development and support for the Quicksilver product line since our early meager beginnings back in 1977. That's 38 years in this very unique unconventional

business. Although we have associated with a few other aircraft brands the Quicksilver has always been our primary product. Our aftermarket products have become commonplace on most Quicksilver models. Our ability to fly on most flyable days allows us to always be on the leading edge of maintenance and most importantly, customer service. Our knowledge of the Quicksilver product line is empirical and learned from experience and not from a book of theory or hearsay.

We are often referred to as the company that doesn't make the plane, we make the plane better.

Kim, Kenneth (our son) and myself know every aspect of every part of every aircraft that is and has been produced with the name Quicksilver attached. The original engineer / designer is a friend of mine and we continue to communicate on a regular basis. We know the product inside and out and for that we spend the better part of every work day on the phone assisting owner / customers on the intricacies of maintaining & operating their aircraft. Often times conversations are on the restoration of original MX's that were built in the early 80's. These flying lawn chairs are evidently holding up pretty good.

The recent introduction of the S-LSA model completes a full circle of hard fought legal compliance. From the days of setting up the frail looking planes in a local hay field to a prominent place in the flight instructor's tool bag. The Quicksilver offers the unparalleled freedom from complex flight but it doesn't release us from the complexities of conducting business in an ever changing stranglehold of regulations and mandates. Many of which can be devastating to a delicate business.

Our company and myself deal with the Quicksilver every day. My office is not a fancy abode of polished imported wood, but that of a plastic folding table with piles of documents and file folders. My drafting computer is a 10 year old Mac that most modern programs don't even run on anymore. I've recently been forced to purchase a "Smartphone" and a laptop computer that runs windows 8. Woo that was a cultural and technology shock.

To say I'm reluctantly moving with the times is an understatement. The Air-Tech facility we're in now was designed and built specifically for the purpose of promoting and servicing the business of Sport Aviation. This facility incorporates a hanger, production shop and administration offices.

The news of the current Quicksilver owners decision was not surprising. This business is extremely difficult and is not forgiving to OJT. Different parts of the USA are more business friendly than others. When the state's government spending is out of control it will sometimes make conducting a marginal business venture unsustainable.

One thing I have learned in business is "Nothing is a sure thing". Change is inevitable.

So what's going to happen with QS??

Today is Oct. 23, 2015. One month from now that answer may be more apparent. This is like a sports writer writing a commentary on the super bowl two weeks before the game. After the game is played his story may be a moot point. I am writing this based on info I have today. If I could predict the future I wouldn't spend so much money on fishing lures.

It should be obvious by now (from my rambling writing) that we have a vested interest in the future of Quicksilver. Ideal solution would be to relocate the company to a more favorable business climate, implement strategic marketing concepts and press on. In the next week I plan on meeting with the principles and players now in control of the Quicksilver destiny. If we had excess capital the process would be simple. Dealing with the cards I have I am relying on my Christian faith and what I have left of any common sense. Naturally, in the past few days I have spoken to many aviation magazine writers, many I didn't even know existed. Most (if not all) of the writers appear to be sincere in that they have a better pulse on the industry and this type of news is becoming more commonplace. No one with a love for aviation wants any legitimate aviation business to falter.

So, right now, as I type, our facility has the ability to continue support to a large percentage of existing owners of Quicksilver product. Many years ago in a similar transaction we were called upon to provide just such services. I would PREFER that the company would continue on with just an adjustment in the change of address. I believe this chapter will be a bit more involved than that. Our team has the facility, the expertise and the willingness to continue on the legendary Quicksilver saga. Typically we stock all the replacement parts for all the Quicksilver planes. We do not stock "all" the parts for the GT line. We have a good inventory stock right now. This should hold us over for the short term. Without the weekly incoming shipment of parts I anticipate this stock to ramp down in short order. The next couple of weeks will determine the future.

One way or another, we will do what's necessary to maintain a good inventory of QS parts. We've done it before and we'll do it again. I am not dead set to doing this alone, however, if I am involved, it will be done with a Lean and Mean attitude using proven marketing strategies along with modern day innovative manufacturing philosophies. This business is not rocket science but does require a lot of out of the box thinking. This is a want industry and not a need. A plumber is a "need".

I will make my best pitch to the entities at what I believe we can accomplish with this phenomenal product that Kim and I (and so many others) have devoted most of our life to. If you are interested in discussing this issue at greater detail I am an open folder on this. I know there are a number of folk that feel as I do about the product. Somewhere along the way emotion has to be removed and good business sense needs to prevail.

I can be reached by calling the office at 985-536-3994 my cell is 504-512-2623

You have just read my 2 cents on the Quicksilver situation.

Thanks

Gene "bever" Borne II

Air-Tech, Inc.