

## Featured Strip East Lake Airstrip 66MI

This is the history of a grass strip (2200 feet long and 70 feet wide) which in the airspace of the Kalamazoo/ Battle Creek Airport (AZO). This story begins with a man by the name of Ray Rhoades who loved aviation. After years of negative experiences with local flying clubs Ray had a vision of owning his own airplane on his own strip. Many pilots would like to have their own airstrip steps from their house but very few people can bring all of the parts of the process together. In the 1980's Ray began to make his dreams come true. With the help of his friend and neighbor, Clint Fleck, Ray started preparing and grading the runway with an old pull behind grader. Clint pulled the grader with a tractor while Ray rode on the grader. Clint lived next to Ray and shared his love of aviation. Clint had taken flying lessons at Western Michigan University many years earlier and was still interested in flying. Ray had FAA and Michigan Aeronautics personnel look at the strip and both organizations gave their approval.

This is the airstrip from the air looking north and you can see East Lake on the left.



Ray's dream was not only the airstrip but also his house. Ray had a hanger built and attached his house with a breezeway to the end of the hanger with a two car garage on the house side of the hanger. In back of his house off the deck he had a

stocked fish pond for easy fishing steps away. The house has since been removed. This is what it looks like today just before touchdown landing to the North.



Ray registered the airstrip in 1982 with the FAA as 66MI East Lake Airstrip. Ray had a Cessna 150 and in November of 1985 bought a nice Cessna 172.



This is the Cessna 172 as seen today. This made a very nice family airplane that was very useful and enjoyable for Ray's family and friends. This story can be an

example of what can be accomplished with a desire and will and limited resources.

This story has a sad ending which can always become part of reality for anyone of us at any time. In March of 1988 Ray had to sell his Cessna 172 and give up flying. He had been diagnosed with mesothelioma and sold the airplane in order to purchase a motor home with which to travel. Sadly Ray passed before he could use his dream airstrip hideaway for the period of time he had planned.

I am part owner of the airstrip and owner of his airplane. Currently there are other aircraft that are based on East Lake. A Bell 407 and a home built also call the East Lake 'home' and the strip is utilized by remote control hobbyists.

Thank you Ray Rhoades and Clint Fleck for making your dream come true.

MPAOA Board Member

Ray Vander Roest