

## Featured Strip

### *McKenzie's Landing IM15*

Lester Rutter became the principal owner of the property on the north side of Golf Club Road between Hughes Road and Gulley Road in Oceola Township, Michigan when he inherited 160 acres with a house on it in the mid-nineteen sixties. "Les" Rutter and his family then moved into the farmhouse that with the accompanying out buildings, was the only residence on the property.

Les Rutter, (imagine if you will, a pilot named "Les" Rutter.) soon constructed a grass runway approximately 1800 feet long extending westward from a barn in which he installed a hangar door and as time passed he stored several different airplanes in the barn.

In 1970 he

purchased a Cessna 337 Skymaster twin-engine airplane.

Obviously he needed a longer runway so he constructed one approximately 300 feet north of and parallel to the 1800 foot long runway.

The new runway was completed in June, 1971 and was about 2500 feet long

with small trees at both ends. He then provided access for the Skymaster from the barn northward to the new runway and moved the airplane from an airport where it had been kept, onto his farm.



Mr. Rutter used the runway with his Skymaster until he succumbed to heart failure while driving his Volkswagen locally in '75 or '76. His heirs sold the property with both runways in usable condition to a Land Development Corporation based in Florida that sold it to another private individual. Ownership of the property was eventually transferred back to the Land Development Corporation that split the property into parcels, sold the parcel with the house and outbuildings, sold the

property with the longer runway to a speculator, and on Friday, April 19, 1991 David E. McKenzie purchased the property with the longer runway.

When Dave purchased the property with the longer runway on it he intended to establish an airport community. That had been the intention of Les Rutter, but the opposition of neighbors and the Township government overwhelmed him. Dave encountered the same objectionable experience, expended five years, and sustained considerable expense for legal assistance to overcome the resistance caused by malicious rumors and falsehoods circulated about his hopes and ambitions.

After purchasing the property Dave began the design of a hangar with an attached house. Nancy Thomas, his fiancée regularly critiqued the design and deserves most of the recognition for the design of the attached home. Nancy and he were united in marriage on May 30, 1992 making it a memorable day for both of them and construction of the hangar with a house began on September 4, 1992. They moved into the home on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day, 1993.

Since that time they have hosted the Judging School for the International Aerobatic Club, Michigan Chapter, No. 88 five times. The schools consisted of two full days of intensive study using the hangar as a classroom and then practice judging of aerobatic performances with the Student Judges observing from the parking ramp at the south end of the house/hangar. The Judging Schools were discontinued several years ago when new home construction and increased population density in the area made the practice of aerobatic flying at the site inadvisable.

Beginning in 1994 Nancy and Dave hosted a family style Open House/Fly-in



called, “A Corn Roast” that would appear to be similar to a Sunday School, “Dinner on the Grounds” on the third Saturday afternoon in August. It was attended by the families, friends, and guests of members of the three sponsoring

organizations, The International Aerobatic Club, Chapter 88, Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 113 from Mettetal airport in Plymouth, and EAA Chapter 384 from Brighton, Michigan. The ladies from The Red Hatters, also participated one year. The event was VERY successful hosting attendees numbering approximately 60 visitors in '94 to a peak of perhaps 200 in 2000. The last Corn Roast occurred on the third Saturday afternoon in August 2007.

Dave still uses the hangar to store the airplane that he is rebuilding and the new one that he is building. He also works on his automobile projects in the hangar. Nancy and Dave still enjoy their home, hangar, and lifestyle very much even though it has slowed down slightly since Dave's retirement from Ford Motor Co.. In Michigan a privately owned airstrip such as McKenzie's Landing that has the FAA assigned identifier, "1mi5" is supposed to be used only by the owner and/or his friends. Dave advises that anyone who lands an airplane at his house will probably be a friend before he/she leaves.