PERRY BROTHERS AVIATION FUELS
CONTINUING A FAMILY TRADITION OF QUALITY, HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

INSIDE
PILOT PROFILE
Dane Patterson

PERSPECTIVES
Jamail Larkins

DESTINATIONS
New Orleans, Louisiana

GEORGIA • JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009
BECOME A MENTOR, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Once a kid with a big dream, AeroShell's Jamail Larkins shares how connecting with your local aviation community can make your passion a reality.

By Jamail Larkins, Ambassador of Aviation & Space Education for the FAA

As a teenager, did you often fantasize of what seemed like the impossible...wishing you could make your wildest dreams a reality? I certainly did. I remember wanting to fly over my hometown of Augusta, Georgia, where I'd be able to see it from the sky above; I craved to get a glimpse of the world from a different perspective.

But it isn't easy to become a pilot. A career in aviation takes a substantial amount of time, energy, dedication and funding. For these reasons, my dream of becoming a pilot wouldn't have been realized without all of the supportive people I've met along the way. My mentors helped me turn my aspirations into a reality. As someone without any initial connections to the aviation industry, it took many acts of kindness from complete strangers to get me into the position where I am today.

Taking the first step in early June 1996 at age 12, I began researching opportunities to fly and came across the EAA’s Young Eagles program—which offers youth between ages 8 and 17 GA flight training. I wasted no time contacting my hometown’s Young Eagles coordinator, Mr. Wyman Fox. My timing was a little off as I had missed the Young Eagles flight rally a few days earlier, but I suppose my eagerness to fly must have touched him—because after some careful planning, he scheduled my first Young Eagles flight that following Saturday morning.

When Mr. Fox picked me up at my parents' house that Saturday, it changed my life forever. Needless to say, the week that followed was one of the longest of my life—I thought it would never end! From that day forward, not only did my passion for aviation become one of the driving aspects of my life, it also formed a strong and rewarding friendship between us that still exists today.

In 1999, I decided to start my own company, Larkins Enterprises Inc., which is an aviation sales and advertising company. During this time, I met Rick Garcia, president and CEO of Gulf Coast Avionics. Mr. Garcia knew of my interest in expanding my own business and helped me fund it. Despite all of the potential issues associated with hiring a teenager as a distributor for a successful avionics and pilot supply company, Mr. Garcia took a chance and saw it through to the end. He patiently mentored me the entire way, and was always willing to teach me the art of the aviation business. Many of the lessons I learned from watching and working with Mr. Garcia and Mr. Fox have stayed with me into my professional career. Because of their willingness to guide me through my aviation journey, I'm immeasurably grateful for both of my mentors, along with all the others who've taken time to help me reach my dream of becoming a pilot. Without them, I'd still be on the ground to this very day, wondering what the birds saw when they flew over Augusta.