

Member Spotlight

This month I would like to introduce some new members of ours – Tom and Ely DeGroot and their son Dakota. Tom is a native of New York, born in Poughkeepsie and raised in Hyde Park along the Hudson River Valley. Ely is a native of Illinois and raised in Cicero, IL located 13 minutes outside of downtown Chicago, but spent most of her summers in Michigan.

Tom and Ely are both fans of car racing and they met at a dirt race track in Willow Springs, IL on a 4th of July weekend. They were both sitting on the Turn 4 bleachers and started talking between heat races.

Tom and Ely have two children:

1. Casey is 27 years old, currently in the Army Signal Corps and stationed in Mannheim, Germany for the next 3 years. He's married and expecting his first child in November 2012.
2. Dakota is 16 years old and a sophomore at Augusta Christian Schools. Dakota is on the Honor Roll, has just received an invitation to join the National Beta Club, and is taking flying lessons.

Tom works for the same great company I do, John Deere (Grovetown), as a Senior Designer in engineering. Ely is a Project Manager for a third party logistics company, GENCO ATC, located in Pittsburgh, PA. Ely works from home (teleworks) and manages large projects implementing warehouse management software for companies across the US and Canada.

Tom has been building and flying models since he was a pre-teen. His first model airplane club used to host a contest once a year at Cole Palen's Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome. They would fly RC models of WW-1 planes until 1:00 in the afternoon and then Cole and his crew would fly their original WW-1 full size airplanes.

Tom's first airplane flight came with a lot of work. He spent 6 hours polishing a Luscombe that was owned by his father's co-worker. The agreement was to help polish all day in exchange for a ride. The ride was one time around the pattern to a full stop. About 8 minutes of flying for 6 hours of work.

Ely's first ride was during the time when Tom was training for his private pilot license. She won a ride in a Katana out of Dupage, Illinois. Tom sat nervously watching the windsock and flags getting blown with 20 knot winds, gusting to 30, hoping it was going to be a good ride. Ely came out of the plane with a great big smile.

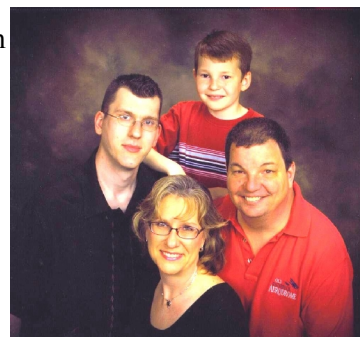
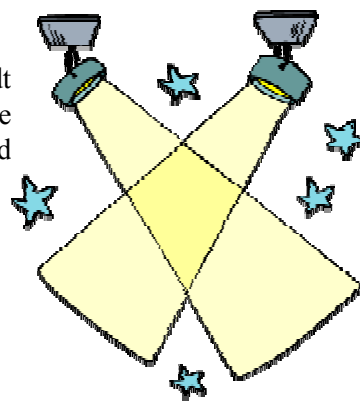
Flying is a family affair for the DeGrootds. Tom is SEL Instrument rated with 370 hours. Ely is a Student Pilot with 8 hours and Dakota is a Student Pilot with 6 hours. They are members of the MCG flying club with access to two Cessna 172s.

Tom's favorite aircraft that he has flown is the Cessna 210. He has made a number of trips from Iowa to the North Carolina beaches in one in the past. The family likes to use an airplane for travel. Their goal is to own their own airplane so they can take it on longer duration trips and not worry about keeping it for a week and only putting 5 hours on the plane. Tom had an opportunity to put in some stick time (no takeoffs or landings) in a Stearman. Because we would love to use a plane for family travel, an ultimate opportunity for him would be to fly a Beechcraft Staggerwing.

The DeGrootds have other hobbies as well. Dakota and Tom fly RC planes and race RC cars. As a family they enjoy camping. Recently Ely has taken up archery again.

The following are some other interesting bits about the DeGrootds:

1. Tom had a passion to make it to the Reno Air Races and Air Show and has made it twice with his family, in 2007 and 2010. Ely has as much passion for historical aircraft as Tom does. The unfortunate part is they didn't fly there in their own airplane.



Ely and Tom with sons

Casey & Dakota

(2007 photo – Dakota is a teenager now)

2. Tom and Ely were part of a team that worked on the expansion and growth of the Quad City Aviators Association out of Moline, Illinois – a non-profit organization established and dedicated to the education of the public on all things General Aviation.
3. They love racing – Tom was a co-owner of a Northeast Dirt Modified #173 in the late 80s. They love watching Sprint cars and late models. They also enjoy viewing RC model airplane racing. Ely worked on cars with her brothers during the summers in Michigan and helped her Dad in his auto body shop.

Tom and Ely have been members of Chapter 172 since the spring of 2012. They look forward to coming to the meetings to meet people and both talk about flying and hear others relate their own flying stories. If you have not yet met them, please do so.

