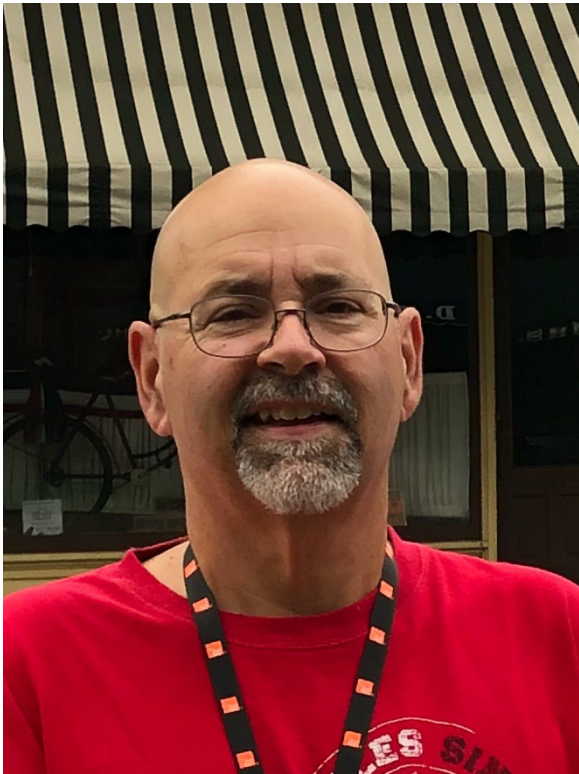


RICK DESANTIS



My aviation journey began in the early 1960's as a young boy, when my father used to take me to the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport to watch planes from the observation deck. I stood there looking through the window in utter amazement as the jets and planes moved about, took off, and landed.

Occasionally, we'd go to the ramp area to watch the planes on the outside. The whining jet engines, smells of burned kerosene, aviation gas, and mineral oil smoke from the propeller aircraft, sparked the flame of my passion for aviation. I didn't know why, but from that point in my life, aviation was in my blood.

It seems like looking through a window was a hallmark of my journey. On my first flight from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati on a TWA at night, I boarded the plane, and the captain took me to the flight deck to look out onto the runway. He even gave me a set of TWA wings to pin on. During the flight, I watched intently through the window as the big radial engines roared us aloft. I

stared, in bewilderment, as blue flames flickered from the exhaust pipes. The sights, sounds, and smells of aviation were indelibly etched in my soul in that moment.

Fast forward to 1980. I was working in London, KY where the seeds of my career were planted. I was fortunate enough to work for a dealership that owned several aircraft. I got to ride in the Beech King Air, and once in a while, in the right seat. I marveled at the chatter over the radios and listened intently to ATC giving clearances and directions. This is what I wanted to be part of.

I began flying lessons at London-Corbin airport (LOZ). Piloting the little Cessna 152 into the sky for the first time by myself was pure exhilaration. Soon, I was soloing around the state, as towns and cities pass underneath my wings on my long cross countries, once again, peering through the windows of aviation.

Somewhere around 1986, I started to take an interest in Air Traffic Control. The London airport had an FAA Flight Service Station (FSS) on field. It was there that the seeds of my career sprouted. Being a pilot, I met all of the Flight Service Specialist working there. While visiting, I would sit and observe them working different FSS positions. During

Under the encouragement of LOZ Facility Chief Mike Sheehan, I began to pursue a career in Air Traffic Control. In 1987, a business trip to Memphis, TN allowed me to look through the window into my future. Driving past Memphis International on Democrat Road, we passed the Memphis Air Route Traffic Control Center. Unbeknownst to me, I would be employed there in less than 2 years and spend the next 25 years enjoying the most rewarding career in the field.

Journeys take many turns in life, follow your light, and always take time to look through the window. Sometimes your future is there.