

## 2015 DELTA AIR LINES "PUFFER" AWARD

# An Innovative and Forward Thinker

By Don Folden, Folden Aviation Inc., Weiner, Ark.

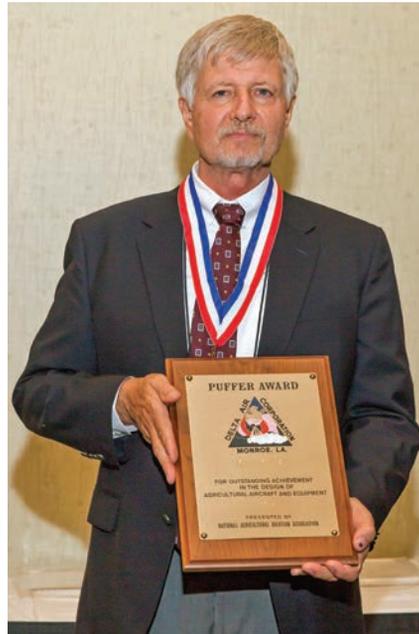
The Delta Air Lines "Puffer" Award is presented to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the design of agricultural aircraft and/or related equipment.

David Eby earned the 2015 "Puffer" Award for his contributions, plural, and commitment to enhancing aerial applicators' efficiency and effectiveness.

Dave grew up on an Indiana grain and livestock farm during the 1950s with the dream of becoming an airline pilot. He obtained a BS in Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering from LeTourneau College in 1971 along with a commercial, instrument and CFI ratings. His plan was on track until the energy crisis of the early 1970s resulted in a reduction of jobs in the aviation industry. So Dave came up with a Plan B. Armed with his background in agriculture and aviation experience, he started AgriFlite Services, an aerial application operation located in Wakarusa, Ind. AgriFlite operates in five states with seven aircraft today.

Like Dave, I became an ag pilot in the early '70s, but in Arkansas instead of Indiana. I took over Folden Aviation from my father and have gradually turned the business over to my son Jeremy, a third-generation pilot, for whom I now fly. A few years ago, Jeremy asked if I would go fly a Thrush for a friend of his that had just lost his medical. The friend had taken his Thrush to Dave's operation to help with the corn fungicide run. That is when I met a very intelligent, soft spoken, organized operator trying to keep 10 to 15 ag planes scheduled and their owners and pilots happy (impossible), doing so while also flying his Air Tractor AT-602.

I could see right away that Dave is very innovative and forward thinking—to the



### DAVID EBY

AgriFlite Services/AeroFlow Systems Inc.  
Wakarusa, Ind.

point that he is not in the same time zone most operators are in. By that I mean he is thinking of the technology needed at least five years from now to address challenges operators and pilots are facing now or will be in the future.

Check valves are one example. Leaking and streaming check valves constantly annoyed Dave. As a result, in 1995, after researching diaphragm check valves, he designed and marketed the first AeroFlow Systems (AFS) check valve with a conical self-cleaning screen in front of the diaphragm. AFS check valves are used nationwide to drastically reduce leaking nozzles, and I can attest to their effectiveness personally. At my operation in Northeast Arkansas

we spray rice with herbicides. Leaking nozzles are of great concern with any chemical, but with herbicides it can mean disaster. The AFS check valves eliminated a lot of headaches and time cleaning and working on leaking nozzles for me. Dave is currently working on a new check valve that will be smaller and even more efficient, helping eliminate the spray fines that cause drift problems.

Dave also developed AgSync, a web-based work order management system. It's designed to manage a wide range of complexities in the crop protection and fertilizer application process from mapping, ordering, scheduling, reports invoicing and inventory. Dave designed the software architecture and worked with programmers to build the first version of the program in 2006 because he felt that a more efficient method of order taking was essential to manage the potential corn fungicide market.

In the winter of 2012, the owner of four co-ops in Illinois asked Dave to manage their AT-802 for them. For some reason, Dave called and wanted me to fly the 802 for them. I of course said yes. This is when he introduced a new GPS guidance system called VeriFly to work with his AgSync program. VeriFly is a tablet-housed unit and the simplest, most pilot-friendly GPS I have ever used. I also use VeriFly in our AT-802 and 550 Thrush at home in Arkansas.

Dave's goal is to help keep agricultural aviation a viable part of modern agriculture by making every aerial application safe, efficient and effective. His state-of-the-art contributions are helping aerial applicators do just that. Congratulations, Dave, and keep the innovations coming! ■

*Don Folden is a second-generation operator and ag pilot who also flies for AgriFlite Services.*