

Keyt speeds to record at AirVenture

By Kim Rosenlof

It's unofficial, but Dick Keyt and his crew are celebrating anyway after besting the previous 500 km record for his aircraft weight by nearly five minutes. The Granbury, Texas pilot performed the record-breaking flight on Thursday afternoon during the air show, flying from Oshkosh VOR to Monticello Airport in Iowa and back in 70 minutes and three seconds at an average speed of 307 mph.

"I knew that I had to cover the course in an average indicated air speed of 250 knots or better," Keyt said. "I never saw less than 260 knots in the whole course, so by the time I got back to Oshkosh VOR, I knew I had made it."

Although this is Keyt's first record attempt, he is no stranger to pursuing speed. A racer in the Kitty Hawk to Oshkosh AirVenture Cup for at least three years, he won the Copperstate Dash air race in October 2000, and he also won this year's Formula RG class race held earlier this week. It was at the Copperstate Dash that Keyt bent his treasured go-fast airplane, the Polen Special,

on a spectacular one gear-down landing at the end of the race. Keyt wasn't hurt but his winning aircraft was, and he had to repair it before entering the Kitty Hawk to Oshkosh race or attempting the record. The newly restored Polen Special had not flown between that dark Friday the 13th in October until last Sunday.

"We hadn't started working on it until January," Keyt admitted. "But really put us behind was that we didn't get the new engine until July 6. Then while installing the new engine we found bad engine mounts, then cracked spars on the elevator, and then a second cracked spinner. It seems like every rock we turned over revealed another pit of snakes."

Keyt is a 767 captain for American Airlines, based out of Dallas, but also holds an airframe and power plant (A&P) certificate. Still, he did not do the repairs on the Polen Special by himself. Said Keyt, "At least a dozen people helped over the last few months, and even if a single one wasn't there, we would not be here."