

Ely Air Lines -

Speed Demon Ghost of the Desert

by Mike Ely and Linda Street-Ely

Mike: As a pilot-to-be in the 1970s, I read every aviation magazine and book I could find. Some of the people I read about and the places they flew are the stuff of legend. One such person was Darryl Greenamyer, at the time, the winningest air race pilot in the Unlimited category. His bright yellow, highly-modified, WWII-era Grumman Bearcat is in the Smithsonian, with his race number, #1, on the tail.

Greenamyer was also a Lockheed test pilot. His day job was pushing the SR-71 spy plane to its limits. Knowing the plane's capabilities, he tried to persuade the U.S. Air Force to use it to break speed and altitude records that the Russians had held for years. They refused. So he set out to do it himself.

An SR-71 proved hard to acquire, so he decided to try it with an F-104 Starfighter, a Mach 2+ interceptor that he had also test flown. As a civilian, he couldn't buy a complete airframe, so he bought pieces and assembled them in his garage. Over a 13-year period, Greenamyer collected parts from crash sites, Air Force



Base rubbish pits, swap deals with collectors, and even NASA. But the one thing he couldn't get was an engine. The Air Force had blocked all of his attempts. So he partnered with Ed Browning, owner of Red Baron Flying Service in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Browning rebuilt WWII fighters into Unlimited-class air racers flown at Reno. He agreed to sponsor Greenamyer's record attempts in the Starfighter. Through Browning's connections, they discreetly borrowed a J79-GE-10 jet engine from the U.S. Navy. For the final touches, the F-104 was painted red and white and registered as N104RB.

On October 2, 1976, at a former military base near the old mining town of Tonopah, Nevada, Greenamyer blazed back and forth across a dry lakebed, speedometers and cameras set to record the attempt. But one camera mal-

functioned, making the 1,023-mph average speed an unofficial record.

On October 24, 1977, with the sun glinting off the wings and more than 200 spectators and officials to witness, N104RB took off to make history. The best description I've read of the 17-minute flight was published in the November 1977 issue of Aviation News:

"It was like watching a ghost. It moved so fast that everything else stood still by comparison. The red and white jet went by without a sound. Impossible. It was so close, so fast, so large, and so silent it defied your sensibility. As you stood there, stunned by the frightening sight of the specter you had just seen, a giant fist reached out of the sky and punched you in the chest. You could feel the sharp crack in your heart."

The cameras worked, and the official recorded speed was 988.26 mph, which beat the previous record by more than 90 mph. Ultimately, the U.S. Air Force did display the capability of the super-secret SR-71 Blackbird. But it was a speed-demon desert ghost that made them do so.

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N104RB PLANE

National Night Out coming up in Raywood, Oct. 7

RAYWOOD - Liberty County Constable John Tucker invites residents to meet with law enforcement personnel, shake hands and enjoy commu-

nity fellowship at National Night Out 2025. The event takes place Tues., Oct. 7, from 6-8 p.m. at 3556 FM 160N. Come out and enjoy free

hotdogs, chips and a drink along with giveaways and goodie bags. Don't miss out on what promises to be a night of community fun and togetherness.



We caught local artist Mandy Murphy of Batson hard at work creating new door decor for Simply Country Cafe up in Moss Hill the other day. More photos of her finished work may be viewed on the Simply Country Cafe Facebook page.

Investigation concludes with arrest of suspect

DAYTON - On Tues., Sept. 9, the Liberty County Pct. 4 Constable's Office concluded an investigation with the arrest of a suspect, identified as Johnny Ray Chamuras of Dayton, in Columbia, South Carolina.

In January 2024, Pct. 4 investigators began an investigation in which Chamuras was a suspect in the distribution of Xanax pills and powder cocaine in Dayton. During the course of multiple covert operations, a Pct. 4 investigator was able to make purchases of Xanax and powder cocaine from Chamuras. As the investigation progressed, it is believed that Chamuras suspected a law enforcement presence and broke off communication with the investigator. Whereabouts of Chamuras were unknown for quite some time despite efforts to locate him.

As the result, Pct. 4 investigators prepared sworn probable cause affidavits in support of three felony warrants for Chamuras' arrest, which were presented to Liberty County Pct. 4

Justice of the Peace Judge Larry Wilburn who granted issuance of three felony arrest warrants for Chamuras:

- Manufacture/Delivery of a Controlled Substance in Penalty Group 3, Less than 28 Grams, a State Jail Felony (Xanax).

- Manufacturer/Delivery of a Controlled Substance in Penalty Group 1, 4g - 200g, a First Degree Felony (Cocaine).

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In 2025 a new lead regarding Chamuras' location was developed by Pct. 4 investigators who sought the assistance of the Liberty County District Attorney's Office. Using the new information, the Liberty County DA's office helped with drafting a court order in furtherance of Chamuras' apprehension. Visiting Liberty County 75th Judicial District Judge Todd Blometh granted issuance of the sworn court order.

The data received, as the result of the court

order, revealed that Chamuras was staying at a hotel located Columbia, South Carolina.

Pct. 4 investigators interacted with local law enforcement and a plan was made to place Chamuras into custody on the outstanding Liberty County felony narcotics arrest warrants. The arrest warrants were served by the deputies of the Richland County, South Carolina Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division and Fugitive Task Force.

Chamuras was placed into custody without incident and transported to the Richland County, South Carolina Jail where he is awaiting his extradition back to Liberty County. All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Constable Thornton asks anyone with information regarding narcotic trafficking to contact local law enforcement or the Liberty County Pct. 4 Constable's Office at 936-258-4711 or by emailing robby.thornton@co.liberty.tx.us. All tips will remain confidential.

Addition to Texas' 10 Most Wanted Criminal Illegal Immigrants List

LIBERTY COUNTY - The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) has added Jose Osman Aguilar Cantillano - a criminal illegal immigrant from Honduras - to Texas' 10 Most Wanted Criminal Illegal Immigrants List after a shooting in Liberty County that left two dead and four injured.

On September 7, during the early morning hours, deputies with the Liberty County Sheriff's Office responded to a shooting at the Alas Locos Sports Bar on CR 5018 in Colony Ridge. Six individuals were shot during the incident.

Through numerous tips received from the public, investigators identified the suspect as Jose Osman Aguilar Cantillano, a 32-year-old Hispanic male. Cantillano resides near the sports bar and owns a white full-size construction-style van. Based on this information, investigators obtained a murder warrant for Cantillano.

On September 8, inves-

tigators executed a search warrant at Cantillano's residence, but he was not located during the time the search warrant was being executed. Later that evening, investigators and deputies returned to the residence where several individuals were identified, including Cantillano's wife, Alejandra Marie Valdez Montoya, a 23-year-old Hispanic female. After interviews and further investigation, Valdez Montoya was arrested for tampering with evidence and transported to the Liberty County Jail without incident.

The suspect, Jose Osman Aguilar Cantillano, 32, 5' 8", and weighing about 180 pounds remains at large and is wanted for murder. He is believed to be driving a white full-size van and may be traveling toward the New Orleans, Louisiana, area or the Atlanta, Georgia, area. His criminal history in Texas dates back to 2016 and includes an arrest for assault causing bodily injury to a

family member and multiple arrests for driving while intoxicated.

Victims identified were Alexis Jasso, 30, Hispanic male, deceased at the scene; Fernando Navarrete, 43, airlifted to hospital but died September 8; Sandra Patricia Valiz Adrian, 42, female, gunshot wound to right hand, treated and released; Aldegundo Alvarez Trujillo, 40, Hispanic male, gunshot wound to left hand, treated and released; Jose Rafael Sanchez, 34, male, gunshot wound to shoulder, treated and released; Andres Gonzalez, 35, Hispanic male, gunshot wound to leg, treated and released.

Anyone with information regarding the whereabouts of Jose Osman Aguilar Cantillano is urged to contact the Liberty County Sheriff's Office at 936-336-4500, or their local law enforcement agency. Anonymous tips can also be submitted through Crime Stoppers at 800-392-7867.

Country Chic fundraiser for Universal Agape Love, Sept. 27

DAYTON - Saddle up with a purpose as Universal Agape Love hosts its Country Chic fundraising event Saturday, September 27 at the Dayton Community Center. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Get set for a fun evening and come dressed in your finest western-inspired attire for an evening dedicated to supporting victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. This event is all about bringing the community together to support the vital work of Agape Love.

Tickets include a catered meal, open bar, and door prize ticket. Items for a silent auction will be up for bids and there will be plenty of entertainment during the evening along with inspiring guest speakers. Tick-

ets are \$100 each or \$1,000 for a table of ten.

In addition, sponsorship opportunities are available in multiple levels. Your sponsorship earns you, or your company, name recognition (website and Facebook), tickets, signage and more all while showcasing your brand to a wide audience. Sponsorship levels include Gold (\$3,000), Silver (\$2,000), Bronze (\$1,000), Food (\$750), Dessert (\$250), and Mechanical Bull (\$250).

Funds raised from this event will directly benefit local victims who often must leave behind everything - their homes, jobs and all sense of normalcy in order to escape the abuse and begin a path toward healing.

To purchase tickets, for

sponsorships or more information, visit the website at universagalaplove.org, call 936-262-7800 or email universagalaplove.org. Agape love is a charitable nonprofit organization 501(c)(3).

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DAYTON - To get up-to-date alert notification, Dayton residents can subscribe to the new Everbridge Community page at <https://public.everbridge.net>. Everbridge is a partner company of the City of Dayton that provides alert notifications to residents at no charge. An email address will be needed for log in. If you have questions or problems with the subscription service, please visit subscriber-help.govdelivery.com.