

Lissie Flying Service
“Chamber Member of the Week”
P O Box 608
Lissie, Texas 77454

#2010-007 – June 21, 2010



Lissie Flying Service has been a long time supporter of the Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce, and is being honored as **“Chamber Member of the Week”**, a weekly series established in order to recognize, honor, and support our Chamber Members.

In 1899, Eagle Lake was well on its way to becoming a booming town and businessmen were hustling and bustling, their minds spinning with innovative ideas of improving the city, running their plantations, operating the sugar refinery, and had just successfully harvested their first 10 acres of rice, just to name a few of the many exciting business adventures that were underway.

At the same time back in Ohio, the Wright Brothers were busy engineering and building their first unmanned glider plane. By December 1903, they flew the first successful, powered, piloted plane, **The Flyer**, for 12 seconds and in 1904, **Flyer II** stayed up for more than 5 minutes! In 1909, the Wright Brothers began to teach Army officers to fly and two years later, the **Vin Fiz** was the first plane to cross the United States. Another Wright Brothers’ plane was also the first to be armed with a machine gun in 1912. **Just five years later**, America declared war on Germany and joined in the military conflict known today as World War I. Military pilots were pushed to the limit and they were forced to perform amazing aerial feats to outwit and outlast the engaging enemy while fighting to protect our freedom. The war ended in 1918 and a few years later, in August of 1921, Catalpa sphinx moths attacked an orchard near Troy, Ohio and the orchard was threatened to be wiped out. World War I Pilot Lt. John Macready flew a surplus World War I “Curtiss JN4 Jenny”, which had been fitted with a makeshift metal hopper and a distribution mechanism, over the orchard spreading the best insecticide available at the time, a powdered lead arsenate, to kill the Catalpa sphinx moths that had attacked the field. Time was of the essence! Use of the plane to spread the insecticide had saved the orchard! That August day in 1921 was the beginning of a new industry - “crop dusting”. But it wasn’t until after World War II (1939-1945) that the industry really got its boost. Thousands of military pilots had been trained to fly during World War II and there was a huge surplus of military training planes, known as Stearman or Kaydet, left over after the war ended. In fact, the military built almost 10,000 of them. During the late 1940’s, the surplus Stearman Biplanes were sold to civilian buyers and most were converted to crop dusters. The “crop dusting” industry was in full swing as farmers were always looking to improve their application techniques.

Dan Gertson of **Lissie Flying Service** shared that it was here, also in the late 1940’s, that the farmers in the Eagle Lake and surrounding areas all pitched in and collected enough money to get the area’s first crop duster pilot, Cecil Beyette, started. Everyone was working together to move the agricultural industry forward, just as it still does today. Flagmen were on the ground waving their flags, one at each end of the field, marking the line for the pilot to follow. The plane would make its pass, releasing its product and then the flagman would move over to the next strip and this process continued over and over again until the field was completely finished. Living in a farming community such as ours, this became a common event, yet an exciting one! Many of us would stop and watch as that plane came across a field. The pilot would make that turn back and swooped down just running right along the top of the crop. We would watch anxiously. Was he going to make it? Pull up! Pull up! You would be thinking. There’s that power line! Does he see it? Now! Pull up, now! And the plane would keep going – You would be holding your breath. He is going to crash? And just at that last

second, UP he went!! You let out a big sigh! And then, here he would come again! You could watch the daring feat for the longest time.

Lissie Flying Service tells us that today crop dusting is better known as “aerial application”. And no one would know better than the Dan Gertson Family of Lissie, Texas as they own and operate **Lissie Flying Service**. Dan Gertson is a third generation farmer and farms alongside the Gertson Family that now reaches to include a fourth and fifth generation. Dan Gertson was born in Lissie, Texas, another small rural town just a few miles from Eagle Lake, in 1936 and has lived there all his life. Dan’s parents, Peter D & Temperance Gertson, moved to Texas from Kansas. Dan lost his precious mother at the age of 9 however his Dad later remarried another precious lady, Katie. Dan married his wife, Maryan in 1954 and is very proud of his six children (Terry, Danny, Ronald, Rhonda, John and Stephen) and of course, his fourteen grandchildren! The Gertson Family is very well known and respected in the agricultural industry as several family members including Dan serve on many local, county, state and national boards.

Just as innovative and motivated as back in the early 1900’s, the Dan Gertson Family decided to push forward and operate their own flying service in 1977 and created **Lissie Flying Service**, with a motto of “**Farmers Working for Farmers**”. They had a vision of offering better quality work not only for themselves but also for the neighboring farming communities. **Lissie Flying Service** started out with just one plane, a Gurrmann Ag Cat and at one time, had four Ag Cat planes up in the air dispersing agricultural products. Around 1994, **Lissie Flying Service** upgraded to the best aerial application planes made – Air Tractor. **Lissie Flying Service** currently is operating two Air Tractor AT-502’s that are equipped with the best modern technology available. The 500-gallon hopper capacity and powerful, reliable turbine engine allows them to get the job done quickly and quietly, with fewer loading trips and less ferry time. The Air Tractor’s wing design and dispersal system results in excellent spray deposition for maximum effectiveness and reduced drift. **Lissie Flying Service** Air Tractor AT-502’s have excellent pattern and deposition in liquid and dry applications. Their lead pilot is Glenn Watts and has been working with Lissie Flying Service since 2000. **Lissie Flying Service** is licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and each pilot has a license through the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) as a commercial applicator to disperse agricultural products. **Lissie Flying Service** is subject to tight restrictions in regard to dispersing agricultural pesticides, insecticides and other agricultural products by the Texas Department of Agricultural (TDA). **Lissie Flying Service** also has expanded to include ground spraying and ground applications of fertilizer and other applicable agricultural products. They currently are serving agricultural producers in Colorado, Wharton and Fort Bend counties.

If you have a need for aerial or ground application, be sure to contact **Lissie Flying Service**. You can reach **Lissie Flying Service** at 979-234-2482 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Saturday and during heavy aerial application periods; they operate under extended hours – daylight to sundown! True farmer hours!

Thank you **Lissie Flying Service and the Gertson Family!!** We are so proud of your accomplishments as a business in our area! We salute you for all your 33 years of service as **Lissie Flying Service** to the Eagle Lake community and surrounding areas!

Please take a moment out of this week and give Dan or any of the Dan Gertson Family a call at **Lissie Flying Service** – 979-234-2482. The Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce would like to thank **Lissie Flying Service** for being a Chamber Member and look forward to working with them in the future!