Kasperwing Korner – Camano Island, WA

By Michael Bishton – New (to me) Kasperwing Owner

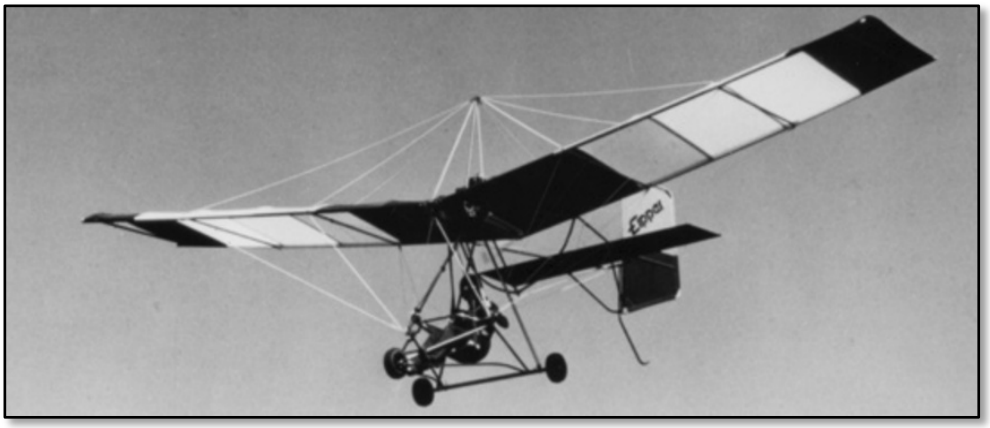
Wikipedia said: "*The Cascade Kasperwing I-80 is an American ultralight flying wing* ***motorglider*** *that was designed by* ***Witold Kasper*** *and* ***Steve Grossruck****. It was produced by Cascade Ultralites and introduced in 1976. The aircraft was supplied as a kit for amateur construction.*"

I like gliding, so now I own one – needing an engine. The price was great. The condition is excellent. When I told my friend, **Martyn King,** about my recent purchase, he told me about **Paul Denny**, who had flown his Kasperwing from Camano Island to Arlington Municipal Airport. Martyn got me in touch with Paul, who mentioned **Scott Price**, who has been flying them since the late 70's/Early 80's. Note: The Kasperwing began as a non-motorized hangglider. I told them that since I was in Seattle, I would love to learn all I could about how the Kasperwing flies, details of how they are assembled, and what the best engine(s) for them might be. So, Scott invited me to meet up at his and Carrie's place on Camano Island for a face-to-face visit and a first-hand tour of the facility nicknamed 'Kasperwing Skunkwerks.' The day turned out so much better than I anticipated.

Scott Price (L), Paul Denny

Scott has a 1,400 ft grass runway on his property (Price Field), which sits on Skagit Bay, and is located about a mile from the Camano Island Airfield Airport (13W). In addition to Price Field, Scott and his crew maintain a 3000' grass strip on the neighboring property. The hangar is home to Scott's Cessna 172 and 3 of his ready-to-fly Kasperwings. In addition, there are two other Kasperwings—in various stages of rehabilitation--belonging to Paul and his long-time flying buddy, Jack Olson. Along with all the flying machines, the hangar is well stocked with replacement parts, Aluminum tubing, several Rotax engines, extra prop blades, and machinery to repair or build whatever part that is no longer available. Other amenities include a Pilot's Lounge with leather chairs and couch, flat screen TV to review flight video from wing mounted action cameras and a well-stocked refrigerator.

Scott pointed out some black and white photos on the wall and told a few quick stories about the early days of hang-gliding in the Pacific Northwest. One of Scott's stories was about how – in the mid-70s – he wanted to improve his Eipper Quicksilver's (hang-glider) lift by adding five feet of wing to each side, another set of top and bottom cables to each side, and a flap on each wing (spoilerons) to help steer the bigger wing. One time, when he was preparing to take off down a hill just North of Seattle, he had one person on each side holding a rope attached to the wing to help hold him down. When he shouted to his crew to let go, the person holding down the right wing didn't hear him. The QS lifted up with the right wingman still hanging on. Scott had trouble staying level. By the time he looked over and saw why--noting the terror in the guy's eyes-- they were high enough off the ground for the other person to potentially hurt themselves…badly. So, Scott did his best to steer the QS down into some low bushes for a soft "crash" landing that scratched them up a little, but neither of them nor the QS was hurt or damaged.



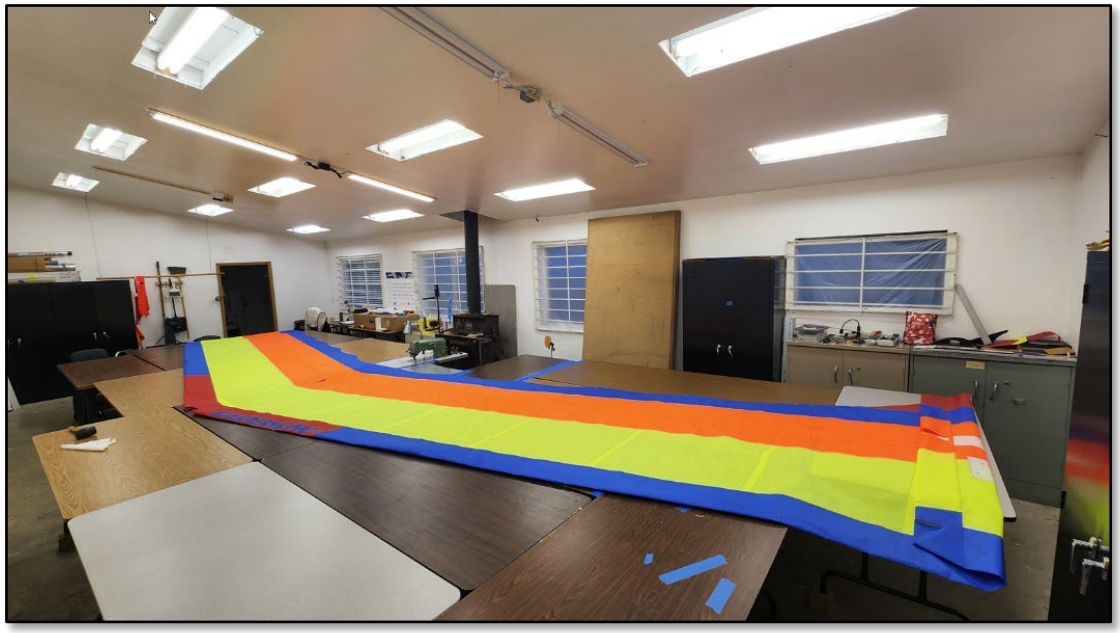
Here is a picture of a weight-shift QS hang-glider with wheels. Note that at this point, it only had two sets of cables on each side, and it did not have spoilerons. I wondered out loud whether Scott had invented them and Eipper copied them, but Scott didn't know.

By now, it was already 11:00 am and the wind was starting to pick up. Scott said that if I wanted to see a Kasperwing fly, it was now or never. He suited up, wheeled out his bird, went through all the preflight checks, then climbed into the harness which he attached to the hang strap secured to the boom (keel tube). He fired up the engine, cruised to the runway in front of the hangar, then took off like a home-sick Angel, with the Rotax 447 and his three-blade prop picking him off the runway in about 50 ft.

Scott went around the pattern, cut the engine to dead stick in, then restarted the engine to complete a touch and go before going around again, softly kissing the ground on the second landing. His demo flight really made me appreciate the Kasperwing's smooth-air agility. Scott and Paul agreed that the 45 HP Rotax 447, married to the 62" three-blade Powerfin prop and 3:1 reduction drive, were the perfect combination for short field climb out and cruising in that 30-36 mph range. A full, 5-gallon fuel tank will provide approximately 2 hours of absolute fun. Scott said that when he cruises around the perimeter of Camano Island, he always has one hand on the steering yoke with the other hand out waving back to everyone who waves up at him. People love to see him fly by.

Scott excused himself because he had a lot to do that day, but I hung out with Paul, and we talked Kasperwing for most of the afternoon. Scott and Carrie's hangar is heated and well equipped with tools, so it's the perfect space for Paul to keep the three Kasperwings in tip-top shape as well as rehabilitate others during the off-season. Paul showed me the two KWs he was currently rehabilitating, with one just about ready to test fly.

Up the hill from the Hangar, there is a big shop where Scott houses and maintains four large, zero-turn mowers used to maintain not only the airstrip in front of their house, but the much longer grass runway on his neighbor's property as well. One side of this large shop has been turned into a "sail loft" that Scott has outfitted with ample lighting, insulation and a very nice fireplace for those dark, wet Northwest winters.



Paul has a couple industrial, walking foot sewing machines for producing and repairing their stock of Kasperwing sails as needed. Here's a shot of one of the new sails in progress, as well as the room layout.

Update (since my visit): Here is a picture of the finished sail, mounted to a trike Paul had been working on. By the way, this is the view once the hangar door is open; you can see the grass airstrip just beyond the concrete apron that runs in front of the hangar. In the distance is Mount Baker and, beyond that is Canada.

Paul mentioned that Steve Grossruck (one of the two Kasperwing inventors) had generously passed along factory specification documents, jigs, manuals, and various parts, before he passed away around 2015 in hopes that someone would keep the Kasperwing legacy alive. Judging by the sheer number of large binders in the bookshelf, I got the feeling that Paul had become the 'keeper of all things Kasperwing,' perhaps taking some of the burden off Leslie Grossruck.

Paul pointed to two good sources for Kasperwing information: **Kasperwing.com** which was started many years ago by Chris Utter and now administered by George Majewski. In addition, there is a **Facebook Kasperwing Ultralights** group that was recently established. There is a plethora of videos and photographs available from the likes of Jack Olson (Olson Productions), John Storbeck, and Don Wolven's YouTube channel. Other information can be found using any web search engine, with the key words of 'Kasperwing,' Steve Grossruck,' etc. The **Kasperwing** has international interest, with current owners in Poland, Austria, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, to name just a few. If you ever have a question, feel free to reach out to Paul through Kasperwing.com.