

# What's In a Name?

Team RV is now Team AeroDynamix



By Jim Froneberger

Team AeroDynamix models their new flight suits (photo by Jim Froneberger).

**WHAT DO YOU** do when you are an up-and-coming airshow act, but many people think you must drive a motorhome instead of fly an airplane? That was exactly the problem faced by Team RV who, with graceful formations of up to twelve aircraft, bill themselves as the world's largest formation airshow team.

"The letters 'RV' are already branded with many spectators because they immediately think 'Recreational Vehicle,'" says Team Lead Mike "Kahuna" Stewart. "So 'Team RV' is like saying 'Team Motorhome' to them. People would see it on our shirts and think there was a motorhome convention in town. That word association is very strong and you can't break it."

Most pilots and aircraft enthusiasts know that "RV" is really a reference to the Van's Aircraft RV series of kit-built aircraft that the team flies. But faced with trying to build their brand nationally to general airshow spectators who don't know as much about small aircraft, the team was finding the name just wasn't resonating with the broader audience.

So it's time to say goodbye to Team RV and hello to Team AeroDynamix.

## **Making the Change**

"About a year and a half ago we sat down as a team and decided we had to make a change," says Stewart. "There's never a good time to do it and you keep putting it off, but as we were getting recognized more nationally, we realized the longer we waited the more the Team RV name was going to get instilled in the marketplace and the harder it would be to change."

Despite their conviction that a name change was the right thing to do, the team members were individually torn about the decision. The name was an important part of their identity – more than just being the airplanes they fly.

"We had become very attached to the name because it was actually the airplane itself that brought us all together," admits Stewart.



“The airplane made it possible for us to do what we do and many of us built our planes ourselves, so disassociating from that was difficult.”

Once the decision was made to change the name, the next obvious question was, “Change to what?” Stewart says that was the most difficult decision of all.

“We started out with a small group on the team talking about names and that really helped us focus on our brand, image, and what it was we were trying to portray,” explains Stewart. “We then began talking to our constituent base about what they saw in our brand and what was important to them. We talked to spectators, airshow directors and committee members, sponsors, air bosses, narrators, and other performers.”

They eventually narrowed it down to a list of four potential names and went back to their constituent base to get feedback. The team ranked the names based on that feedback and Team AeroDynamix was born.

Once the new name was chosen a lot needed to change – new flight suits, a new web site, new email addresses, new contracts and press kits, new Team AeroDynamix decals for the airplanes, and a new design for the ICAS convention booth. The process started last March, but they knew changing the name mid-season was not an option. Any change would need to be made in the 2012-2013 offseason.

There was just one problem: 2012 was shaping up as the team’s breakout season with performances at Sun ‘n Fun in the spring and EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh during the summer. The lame duck name would be getting world-class exposure only to disappear a few months later.

“This has been a very big year for Team RV, so it’s very bitter-sweet,” admits Kari Morris, the team Marketing and Public Relations Officer. “Ideally you change the name before you debut on a big stage like Sun ‘n Fun and Oshkosh, but since that was not possible,



*Top: Team AeroDynamix will debut with their new name for the 2013 airshow season, but the formations will still be large and graceful (photo by Jim Froneberger). Above: Team Lead Mike “Kahuna” Stewart (Team AeroDynamix photo by Kari Morris).*

the next best thing is to do it as soon as possible afterwards.”

Mike and Kari also say that the new name allows the team to focus their brand on the entertainment value they provide rather than focusing so much attention on the specific airplane they fly. Stewart says the new name will allow the team to grow and expand with fewer limitations.

While the new name gives the team a strong new identity in the marketplace, it does have one drawback according to Kari, who also serves as narrator for the team at some venues.

“It can be quite a mouthful on the microphone compared to Team RV,” she laughs.

### **Creating a New Brand**

“This change, I think, is very unique historically,” says Kahuna. “We’re not having a change of leadership or management or even pilots. It’s all exactly the same except for the name. Normally name changes are for some other reason and the organization might be running away from a name. In our case there was no conflict or issue, we just didn’t think the old name fit anymore.”

“When you analyze the new name you can see some of what we were trying to capture,” he explains. “With Team RV, there was nothing ‘Aero’ about it. It didn’t say ‘airplane’ to most people. The new brand does that.”

“And the dynamic of what we do is so very unique,” he concludes. “So when you look at the pieces of our new brand, you can see that we wanted someone who knew nothing about us to be able to see the name and have it conjure up images that we could fill-in when we actually go up and deliver the entertainment.”

Look for Team AeroDynamix in 2013 at an airshow near you. 