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Colors of the Sky

**A DNR pilot
reflects upon
race and other
flying matters.**

BY GEORGE VUKELICH

David Greene is chief of aeronautics and aviation manager for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The DNR's 18 airplanes are flown by 21 staff pilots, in addition to limited-term pilots hired to fly fire-watch flights in the spring. Greene is responsible for all of them.

Greene, 32, was born in Milwaukee; he moved with his family to McFarland when he was 4. His father, Jim, was a pilot, and he would take young David up on plane rides, and young David fell in love with flying. He soloed at 15—earning a student pilot license before he got a driver's license—and received the major portion of his aviation training at Gateway Technical Institute in Kenosha. His aviation ratings include airline transport pilot, ground instructor, flight instructor, instrument, single-engine/land, multi-engine/land, single-engine/sea and multi-engine/sea.

While he still performs pilot duties, he spends more time flying a desk—hiring and training pilots and developing DNR programs. Those programs run the gamut from tracking law violators to tracking wolves. Greene is married to Cathy. They are parents of Clarissa, born last August.

"Yes, I am the only black pilot in the DNR. During our recruitment of pilots, we do look for black pilots to hire. We look for other minorities as well, and that includes women pilots.

"From what I see in the commercial



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Greene: Not too long ago, white pilots handled all commercial flying jobs.

aviation industry, I think there's a reason DNR has only one minority pilot at the moment. Not too many years ago, all the commercial flying jobs were acquired by white pilots. They were doing all the mail runs. They were doing all the freight hauling. They were doing all the people hauling.

"Minority pilots got into this commercial process relatively recently, and the minority pilots are going for it. They're shooting for the moon—airline jobs, whatever. If they don't make it—or if they do make it and get tired of it—then they can look for something else.

"There are also jobs for black pilots, minority pilots, in military aviation, and minority pilots are in there doing a great job.

"A job as a DNR pilot wouldn't be high on their priorities list for a couple

of reasons. One is the pay. You get more pay in the airlines. The other reason is 'stature.' The uniform, the travel, the glamour. That kind of stuff.

"I'm involved with a lot of government agencies and organizations—the



Airborne Law Enforcement Association, the International Association of Natural Resource Pilots, the Seaplane Pilots Association, federal agencies, state agencies, municipalities, county sheriffs—and there just aren't many black or minority pilots in them. The jobs are there. The applications aren't.

"I think that minority pilots, women

pilots, just don't have the desire to do this type of flying—at the moment. I also think that will change.

"For a pilot, DNR may not be as high-profile as the airlines—certainly, it's not as high-paying—but I think there's quite a bit of glamour in what we do.

"In a sense, we're kind of like bush pilots. I'd say bush pilots with direction, because we do have a mission and we do have guidelines. We check with the tower before we go.

"The majority of our work is done internally, although we do work with other agencies like the Department of Agriculture, the Air National Guard. The majority of our flights are divided between law enforcement and fire control. That's our major thrust. But we do a variety of environmental-type things with the airplanes: animal surveys, waterfowl surveys, aerial photography, aerial video.

"We don't plant fish, but we do track them. We have telemetry equipment with which we can track everything from wolves to squirrels to turkeys to fish. The equipment in the plane makes it possible to get very specific and enables us to track sturgeon or walleye or channel catfish.

"I think that the variety of assignments makes flying for the DNR a glamour job. I've always thought that flying for the airlines must be like driving a bus." ■