



For aviation enthusiasts **Jurgis Kairys** is the synonym of aerobatics. He comes directly from Lithuania for a unique performance during [Athens](#)

### [Flying Week 2013](#)

and made us the great honor of giving a short but very concise interview about his life as a pilot. Read it and enjoy it as we did...

Q: How many hours and how many different aircraft types have you flown with?

A: I have flown with all types of aerobatic aircrafts produced in the Soviet Union, including those I have modified myself. I have also flown some planes of World War II, LA-9 Lavochkin, I-15, I-16 Polikarpov. Once I was also trusted for the landing of a MRIYA. The feeling I had was like I was handling a normal airplane, but from the ninth floor of a building.

**"I have flown with all types of aerobatic aircrafts produced in the Soviet Union"**

Q: We guess that the fact that you have studied engineering helped you in your career as a pilot. If you agree on that in what extend was that? Does that help you also operate every aircraft to its limits?

A: When I was studying to become a pilot I reached a point that I could not go further. I flew everything that flies, but I was also studying everything that flies. That gave me the basis to then evolve my equipment. Eventually I realized that I am ready to become an innovator in this field. When I was in the national team of the Soviet Union saw that everyone gets his way, one is drifted by his ambitions, everyone wants something different... I decided to take initiative, to gather all the information, to synthesize an average and present my material to the designers / manufacturers. They saw the logic and benefits in my proposals and so they suggested to work together. I was asked to become a test pilot. Initially I said no, because I thought it was too bold. But then Sukhoi Design Bureau struck and finally I took the decision. I was also suggested to choose a military career, but remained in the championship. We started our cooperation on Su-26 airplane, firstly in a design basis (1982). The first prototype of Su-26 took off in 1984. I flew with that airplane in the World Championship. This plane would not exist if someone did not undertake its development. The next plane came modernized in 1985. From variation to variation of airplane the design office had taken steps beyond, but a lot of things had to change in order for the plane to become competitive.



Q: You have been asked to work as a test pilot for the Sukhoi Design Bureau. How difficult was that? How dangerous, demanding but also how challenging is to be a test pilot?

A: Sukhoi office was working on the reliability of Su-26 onto the structure, while the demands of the pilots, their ideas were passing through me. Then the Su-31 was entirely designed with my guidance. I had become a “dictator”. I had to explain our designers, our specialists, what we

really want; to defend my opinion, to insist . After the races we were called by the Central Committee of the Party. We had to stand up and speak, saying things opposite to what our leadership was supporting, trying to make diplomatic maneuvers, while the planes were not suitable and were killing many pilots. I remember how I would get up and say "Sorry, but we have the following problems, the plane in this level wants work, we have to evolve so if we want to have good airplanes." After this of course, I had many problems with the leadership but eventually we were all understood and let us move on. Su-31 flew first time in 1992, and in the demonstration I performed some difficult maneuvers. Nobody expected it to be so efficient in aerodynamics. Even the experts who worked on that airplane were shocked by its features. It is a unique plane.

We managed to make a small step. It's a different plane, not like the Su-26, but its evolution. The initial plans were for it to be lighter, but there was a technical obstacle and so it is heavier than the Su-26 and this is its only drawback. Certainly my own plane now is very lightweight. These as regards Sukhoi and flight testing.

Q: JUKA is an airplane of your design. For those who do not know its name comes from your name actually (Jurgis Kairys). It wears the same engine with Su-31 but it is lighter. Does that make more flexible in the air as expected? How important can it be to fly with a fully customized airplane?

A: The JUKA was an airplane that was manufactured by the Moscow Aviation Institute and a group of young designers led by Zidoveckiy. Before JUKA they were designing the Kvant airplane, but had many mishaps with both projects and reached a dead end. It was literally a pile of metal abandoned in a corner. I was watching this effort and decided to work on it, to correct and improve the project in order to get where I dreamt? that I can get to. The workload was evolved in two main phases. In the first two years where the most corrections took place

and after test flights the second phase of other four years. I had so many other obligations and so I flew with JUKA for the first time, I think during the races in 1992 or 1994. This plane is so much lighter. In the initial stages - to the custody of the Institute – it did not have enough speed and had great problems in the ability to control and maneuver. For me, the changes we had made on the airplane were reasonable and effortless. We reduced the weight, changed many details and this airplane flies even now. It is actually 100 kg lighter, which in combination with the same engine power allows greater potential and better control. I want to say that this airplane is the first, original, prototype, and if it went on production, if there was a continuation, I have too much material to get it refined. It has been so successful in its construction that it is offered for changes and improvements and even can come into production. Unfortunately I have no free time. Having made this plane I was happy to play and fly with it, I still do, but I just do not have the time.

Q: We have recently watched your airplane being specially decorated. Is the special decoration of aerobatics airplanes essential? Except helping the audience to recognize the aircraft in the sky does it also offer extra confidence to its pilot?

A: Of course it is very important and it has a purpose. If you see a particular color for example, this is not chosen by luck and you will love it. The bottom line is to be different from the others, not repeating anyone else. The audience must also be able to clearly see you and you have to provoke their interest.

**"The bottom line is to be different □ from the others, not**

**repeating anyone else"**

Q: Your formula (JK AEROBATICS FORMULA RULES) is followed as rule for the Elite Aerobatic Formula competition. How proud are you for this formula? Can we say that this is the result of your many years experience and somehow your personal offer to next pilots generation?

A: Yes indeed the formula summarizes a lot of things. And now some teams have begun to organize similar demonstration races. I would say however that the international committee CIVA remains very conservative. Everyone looks at his own ambitions and interests, prevailing amateurism and refuse to discover new paths to the evolution of the sport. I've done it and I've shown how it works. But when you get into an organization, that reduces time for flights, and flights is what I love the most.



Q: Is it true that the JK AEROBATICS FORMULA RULES try to combine the best way the pilots skills, with manufacturers inventiveness and audience's needs for entertainment?

A: Of course it is just as you say. Way must be found, however, to judge the quality of a flight and the level of a pilot objectively rather than subjectively.

Q: Agricultural airplanes were based near your house when you were little. Perhaps that was the first reason to become a pilot. Nevertheless what was your motive to fly? What was your motive to become an aerobatics pilot?

A: Because of these aircrafts I was ready to become a pilot from the age of 12! My first thought on that was probably when I was walking on a dirt road one day, wearing wellies which were most probably covered with water and clay up to the knee, and suddenly I saw a passing plane and I thought, "I have no business here (in my village in Lithuania), I must climb higher". I was maybe 10 years old.

**"I have no business here, I must climb higher"**

Q: What is your relationship with military airplanes? Have you ever flown with one of them? Which is your favorite and why?

A: My relationship with the military planes is mostly of interest. They have very interesting technology especially in technical solutions, the logic of their construction and their evolution. But for me there was no point to “touch” the military theme , I liked more the sport and what we did with demonstration airplanes, and now you can see the result. It is freedom – the first word for me, the most precious word for me and there is no other thing so important for me as freedom. Test-pilots of course were not military personnel but to continue working for the Air Force was completely different from what I really wanted. I had the opportunity to fly the SU-27 with Sukhoi test-pilots. They gave me the opportunity to follow their full flying operational schedule. Another opportunity was for me when coming back from an air-show with a MRIYA and they let me land it. I do not remember if it was a MRIYA or ROUSLAN (AN-124), I just remember that we were returning from the Philippines. It was like landing an airplane from the 9th floor of an building. They told me "Just do not try to centralize it like yours! "

Q: Which is your favorite Air Force aerobatics team or Solo Demonstration airplane? (e.g. Red Arrows or RNLAf F-16 Demo).

A: Air Bandits! I like their logic, everything.



Q: Since 1974 that you started flying aerobatics you have won a lot of medals and won a lot of prizes starting really early in 1979. You have been recently rewarded by Lithuanian Prime Minister with the Sports Glory Commodore Cross. Was that really the biggest achievement in your career?

A: I do not know. It would be naive to expect a medal or some praise to the race, for me the important thing is to win or demonstrate a higher level. Or if you represent a country this is probably more important than a medal. But the medal remains of course, I have them all somewhere, I keep everything?. But of course I have to admit that if you receive a commendation at such a high level, that means something.

**"... for me the important thing is to win or demonstrate a higher level"**

Q: You are also member of Air Bandits. What was the need of developing such a team? Flying with two other fellow pilots gives different results in the air? Do you fly in a different way comparing to your solo aerobatics demonstrations?

A: It's something different, a different logic. Everybody tries to fly smoothly and evenly when flying in a team. We do not, we're bums (bandits), we build a different show, the more unexpected moves, the better for us. We do not try to fly with the same aircraft, just showing some things together, we perform group figures combining all of the planes, but generally try to follow the way of Air Bandits, a different way.



Q: Who is your favorite aerobatics pilot? Anyone from the newest generation?

A: I do not have one. Really I do not. I can honestly say, for me the important thing is to get perfect or to innovate, to look forward, if you know what I mean. For me if something has been done then it has already passed, you must go on, trying to climb to the next level, to study, to be ready. Even what you see today, I shall weigh the capabilities of the airplane and my own, I will ponder the risks and how I can show off my skills flying my current plane. So I do not comment on others. They do what they want.



Q: Flying requires a lot of sacrifices. What would you like to suggest young people who wish to fly. Should they follow their dream and what aerobatics flight would offer them in particular?

A: Literally flying requires sacrifices, there are disasters, there are misunderstandings, the human factor. First of all I would advise young people to know the planes they intend to fly. To know their capabilities, study them and then use what the machine can offer. After that to know their own capabilities, not to exceed them, not to be gladiators against the others. The gladiator is suicidal, is a man with impaired psychology. There are many pilots with such mentality, but life shows that at some point unfortunately they do not fly anymore ...

**"There are many pilots with such mentality, but life shows that at some point unfortunately they do not fly anymore ..."**

Q: We are waiting for you to come in the forthcoming Athens Flying Week 2013 next September. Have you ever come to Greece again in the past? What should the audience expect from your demonstration?

A: No I have never come to Greece. I believe that the audience will not get bored. \*

*\* (Jurgis Kairys came to Greece a few days after the interview and landed his plane at Tatoi Air Base. He will come back later on September 26th for the Athens Flying Week Air-show.)*



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