



RVator's Log

Newsletter of the Twin Cities RV Builder's Group

September 2013

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Upcoming Events

September 15: - It's picnic time!!!! Eating at 12:30 ... Sky harbor Airpark as usual. Details on page 10.

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Minnesota Wing Van's Air Force

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Shop Notes

This past weekend we flew the RV-7 to Milwaukee for a wedding. We're at the reception talking with some old friends from my son's UW-M days and the conversation wanders to the "So what have you been doing in your retirement?" phase. You know what's next. I can guarantee just about every RV builder has been there. You "casually" mention you flew here in an airplane you BUILT. There is a moment of incredulous silence. You spend long minutes trying to explain how and why you have accomplished such a seemingly super-human task. You probably whip out your smartphone teeming with at least 700 construction pictures (well that's how many I have!). Your old friends stand in humble awe of your astonishing skill, perseverance, and steadfast determination. You think to yourself, "Now this is why I REALLY spent thousands of hours and tens of thousands of dollars on this project. I am da man!!"



There are very few life experiences that rival building and flying your own RV. I rank it right up there with getting married, having babies (or helping to have babies), first solo and getting that airline job. For years and years the RV project consumes nearly all of our spare time and certainly all of our spare dollars (if there is such a thing!). Think back for a moment and see if you can recall that first exposure to flying an RV. Van used to call it the \$40,000 airplane ride. Now it is the \$100,000 airplane ride!! In the early 90's, Jerry VanGrunsven gave me a ride in his RV-4. I was totally hooked and wasted no time in ordering the tail kit and spent many hours honing my accounting skills as to how I was going to pay for this. A year or so later, I felt it would be cool to have Jerry take Jean and the kids for a ride. So we all headed down to Jerry's home on the Sky Harbor Airpark for an afternoon of RV fun. #1 son Craig (11 years old at the time) wrote this narrative for his English class circa 1993:

The RV-4

My dad is a pilot. We own a Cessna 180. My dad also has an interest in RV-4s. I know you are thinking the camping vehicle. An experimental aircraft to be exact.

My dad is also a member of an RV club. So we started building an RV in our basement.

Anyway, my dad asked a friend for a ride in an RV. So we all went to a man named Jerry VanGrunsven for the ride of our lives. Jerry is the brother of the person who invented the RV. He gave my brother a ride first. I was surprised when I saw the plane doing loops and rolls. I wasn't so sure about doing aerobatics when it was my turn to go for a ride.



Brother Dale tries on the front seat before his RV ride



When up in the air I told Jerry to do a roll. I loved it!! We did another, but this maneuver was called a barrel roll. When we pulled out I could feel gravity pulling us. I tried moving my hand while pulling G-forces. My hand was weightless and tingling. I had lots of fun.

Jerry VanG and Craig. How many folks has Jerry introduced to RV flying? Maybe thousands!!

My mom went up next. She didn't do any rolls because she had a cold. Having a cold in an airplane doesn't feel very good. She said she liked it. She told Dad to sell the 180 and built an RV-4!

We all had a great time. I can't wait until we finish the RV. I still have a lot of fun in the 180 also. I hope to have an airplane like an RV-4 when I grow up.

- Craig Weiler



Jean lavishes in business class of the -4

* * * * *

MN Wing's Latest

-Doug

Well here we are in the middle of summer, which seems to have started about a month ago!! I haven't heard a lot of newsy items this month but here are a few tidbits that I am aware of:



Mr CFI Tom Berge –

Our resident transition-training instructor Tom Berge has been blasting through astonishing amounts of avgas this summer.

I think Tom splits his time just about evenly between doing pre-buy inspections and training of new RV pilots.



Tom is now listed on Van's company website as an official RV transition training instructor so he has been working with new students from just about all over the country these past few months.

He's made a number of ferry flights from the west coast and the southern states as well. The "old" yellow -7A is racking up the time.

Pete Howell – RV traveler extraordinaire –

Last time I talked with Pete he had just passed the 1000-hour mark on his RV-9A. Work had kept him pretty tied down last year but in July he and wife Andi made a trip to Moab, Utah and enjoy some stunning scenery. Here are a couple shots:



Moab is less than 6 hours away in an RV!!

Peter Fruehling – owner of the world’s best RV-4 (but you know that!)



Peter has had a busy summer with work and traveling WAY too much for his job at Jostens. So the RV-4 has spent a lot of time in the hangar.

But last week he was home and decided it was time to take daughter Teagan for her first ride in the -4.

Certainly this shots says it all:



New plane... new paint!!!

- Brad Benson

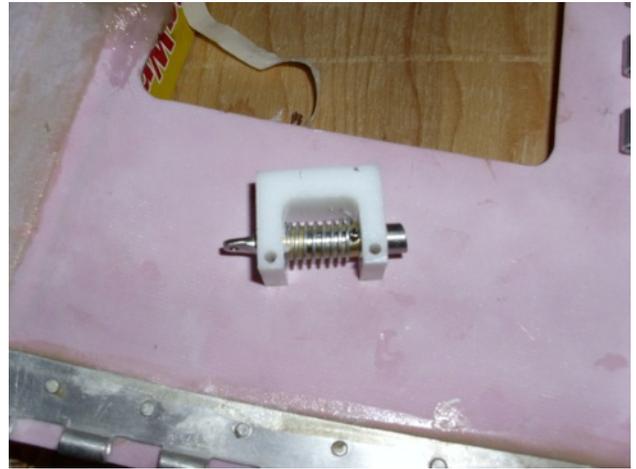
Background - A software engineer by trade, I learned to fly at Lake Elmo in 1997 at Mayer Aviation. Through my company, we purchased a 1975 Piper Archer, which we based in a rented T-hangar there. About that time, I decided that I wanted a Piper Twin Comanche like the one I flew for my multi-engine rating. However, the EAA chapter I was involved with at South St. Paul visited a member's project shortly after that which caused me to rethink my decision. Mike Hilger's project was under construction at the time and he had everyone over to his hangar to show it off and ask questions. I was impressed enough with the kit that I looked it up that night, read everything I could about them, and decided it would be a better fit for what I wanted than a Twin Comanche.

The Build - I ordered the kit in the fall of 2000 and got the empennage, wing, and fuselage kits all at once. Running a business and maintaining a good familial environment was important, so with the limited time available I ordered the quick-build option. I don't remember the date when I rented the U-Haul truck and brought home the crates from the freight terminal, but I do distinctly remember getting everything unloaded, opened, etc. I also remember going inside that night, turning on the computer, and reading that just that morning Van's introduced the "new" RV-7. Oh well...

Over the next 11 years, progress continued. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, as our family grew and life happened. Still, I plugged away at it now and then, trying hard to enjoy the journey. I had set aside 10% of the kit cost early on to obtain replacement parts, as I knew I'd screw some things up, and that turned out to be not too far off the mark. Multiple trim tabs, a second rudder skin, replacement wing skins, replacement seat pans, and more.

I customized a number of things - a composite panel based on Laird Owen's blank, a hidden hinge & latch system for the oil door, cowling pins inserted from the rear through the NACA vents, recessed wingtip nav/strobe/landing lights, and a num-

ber of other things all took longer than I thought they would but were enjoyable to design.



By far, my favorite part of the build was the electrical and avionics systems. I designed and analyzed both in advance of actually starting them, and was extremely happy that both powered up without a single short - everything worked the first time. If only the rest of the project had gone as smoothly!



The Paint - I had kicked around several concepts for the paint scheme, but it wasn't until about two years ago that the final concept started to take shape. I knew I wanted a metallic silver and red design, so started playing around with different ideas. Using scanned copies of the side/top views from the plans, I used an image application called Acorn on my Mac to see what worked and what didn't. I didn't have all the details settled until mid-May of this year - only two weeks prior to dropping it off at the paint shop.





I had visited Midwest Aircraft Refinishing in Hibbing, MN with Vince Bastiani last fall and on the flight back in his -7, we both agreed they were the place we wanted to have do our aircraft. They have a wonderful facility only an hour's flight north of the Twin Cities, and have done everything from light experimental aircraft up to light jets. I am extremely pleased with their work on my aircraft - from disassembly, bodywork, paint, and re-assembly they were focused on ensuring that I was happy with the work.



Thanks - A number of MN Wing members made this journey contributed time and expertise - Mike Hilger made a number of Tech Counselor visits and Tom Berge provided much wisdom along with transition training. When the world ended one day (i.e. when the slider canopy frame kinked while being "fit"), Alex Peterson said to bring it over and he'd weld it up. I likely never would have attempted the composite rear slider skirt were it not for the expertise and encouragement from

Pete Howell. Bob Collins, Bryan Flood, and especially Vince Bastiani were a constant source of encouragement and helping hands as well. - So, when's the next pancake breakfast fly-out?!?!

Yellowstone or Bust - 2013

- Bernie Weiss

The alarm buzzed at zero dark thirty, which is typical for a trip planned by Tom Berge. Time to get out to the airport and pack up for our long awaited trip. Months before, Tom had floated the idea of an RV trip to Yellowstone. Ten people signed up which set the tone for a great trip. Our leader now had his work cut out, as he had to plan a five plus hour trip with four different RV types leaving from five different airports travelling from the flat plains of Minnesota through the Rockies and Tetons. In typical Berge fashion, the trip was designed with precision, from Lat/Long coordinates of the three mountain passes we were to traverse to the reserved camp sites at West Yellowstone airport as well as rental cars and fly fishing guides.

With the exception of one work-related cancellation (Peter Fruehling) the group of nine aircraft departed west on the morning of June 26. In spite of all the planning, multiple meetings, lots of emails, and phone calls, Tom could not control the weather.



Hmm... maybe a high dew point?

The morning started with a dew point matching the temperature with low ceilings. With the exception of Alex and Geri Peterson everyone was at the airport ready to go at 0600; the weather did not cooperate. By 0800, Alex showed up and started to pre-flight and the skies had lifted at a couple of the airports. It was decided that the group from Anoka, Crystal, and Princeton would take off and meet up later with the group from Lake Elmo and South St Paul. Our leader waited almost three hours for the weather to lift and allow the second flight to depart.



Westbound!! Spearfish, SD

First stop was an easy, but long flight to Spearfish SD. The airport elevation was 3933 ft, but did not prove much different than a Midwestern landing albeit a bit faster groundspeed. The airport crew could not have been better as they helped us all approach the fuel pump where we were topped off.



Devil's Tower

Immediately after departure we knew it was going to be a different set of scenery; we climbed up over a few high hills and off our right wing we could see Devils Tower and then on the horizon we started to see mountains; not those little anthills we have in Minnesota but big tall, ragged mountains.



Bruce Fishbeck and Tom Court at Spearfish

A leisurely lunch and a bit of waiting paid off as we received a text from Tom that the rest of the group was on their way. The first group departed for the mountains and West Yellowstone.



Buffalo Bill Reservoir

As the mountains started to get bigger we paid attention to our navigation and planned to traverse our first pass named Powder River Pass. Powder River pass is 9677 feet so we crossed at about 10,500. Those that had O2 were happy and alert as they climbed up to cross the mountains. Not far from Powder River we came to Sylvan Pass, which is right before Yellowstone Lake. Only one problem: between the pass and us was a taller mountain. Remembering the words of our leader, "always follow the roads", we made a slight turn to the north; flying below the peaks on both sides we circumnavigated the peak in front and found the pass heading to the southwest. Through the pass we could make out a large gorgeous lake and then an endless sea of evergreens opening up to the park. While I was in awe of the view I hit some turbulence that sent my camera flying up as well as a crescent wrench that I had used to try and stop an O2 leak. The camera landed on the

seat and the crescent wrench landed on my shin. Ouch!! (Lesson learned: keep the tool bag closed and secured) We were to be treated to even more turbulence as we passed over the evergreens, which was good preparation, as we needed to stay alert for the blustery landing at West Yellowstone.



Matt Adams and son Noah

What an airport, 8400 feet long and 6649 feet elevation with winds at 170 blowing about 15 gusting 20 the landing on runway 19 was going to keep us alert.



RV-9A driver Mark Ericksson

As soon as we landed, we were greeted by Sandy and her daughter-n-law who guided us to our parking spots near the campground.



Yellowstone welcoming committee

Three hours later when the winds picked up another 5-7 knots the second group arrived. They came in like a precision team and landed perfectly, one after another.



The best of accommodations – Wyoming style

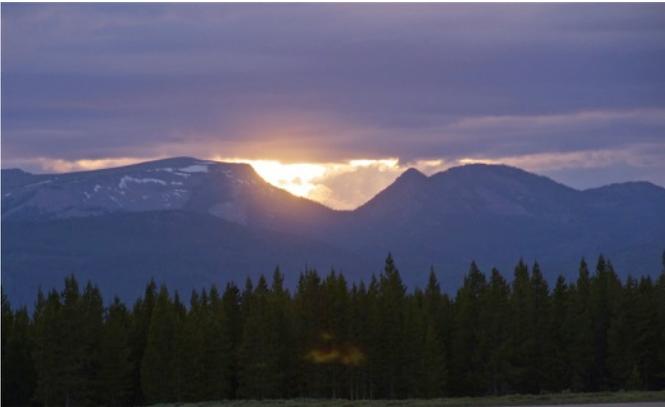
The campground was about 100 yards from the parking area. To assist us in transporting our gear there were two wagons for our use. The campsites were nicely prepared, flat without stones or sticks. Best of all, the ground was soft enough for us to put the tent stakes in by hand. As soon as the tents were up we headed into town to get some dinner. The restaurant choice was easy; it had cold beer.

The sleeping weather was perfect, not hot and a little cool. In Yellowstone we went to sleep to the sound of howling wolves versus the loons that we have in Minnesota. We had been assured that the wolves and other animals (bears) are outside the airport property. That was comforting news, but the sound of the wolves did sound a bit too close.



Our fearless leader

The next morning we split into two groups, one going to the park and the other going fly-fishing. Although we knew of the outfitters, we were not able to make reservations for enough guides so half of the fly fishing group had to reschedule for the next day.



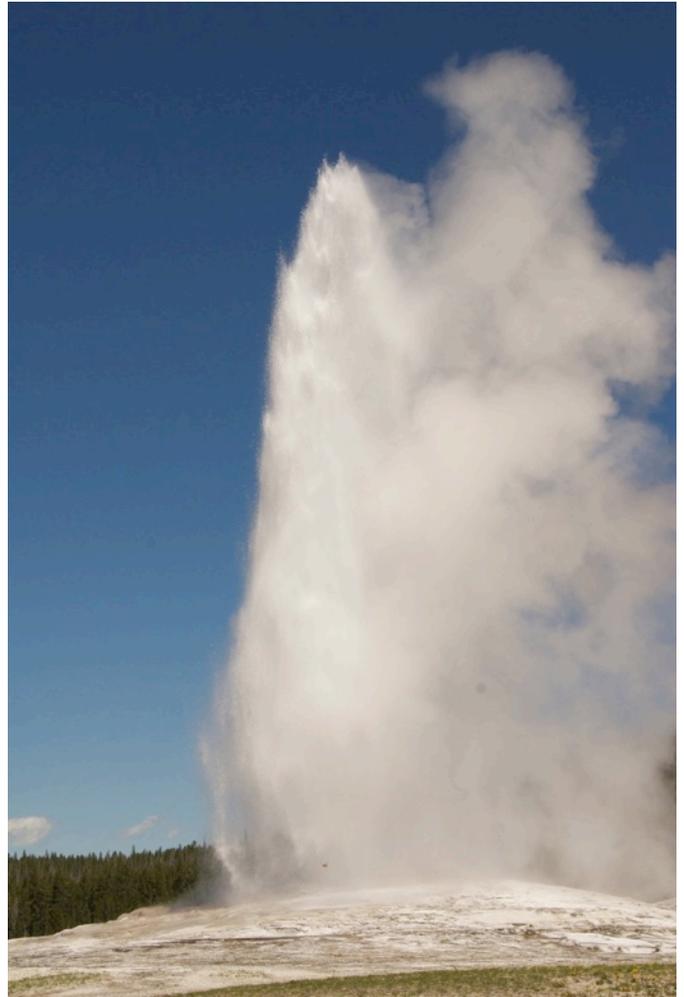
Evening in the mountains

Yellowstone is a big park, covering over 3400 square miles with parts in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. The park has everything from geysers, mountains, waterfalls, plateaus and forests with hundreds of species of animals including the ever-present bison, elk, wolves, and bears (big grizzly bears)



A lazy afternoon

The numerous geysers, of which the most famous is Old Faithful, are powered by the very active volcano, which makes up the park. In fact Yellowstone Lake, which is one of the largest high-altitude lakes in North America, is centered over the Yellowstone Caldera, the largest super volcano on the continent. The super volcano has erupted several times during the past 2 million years. You just might have seen this photo before:



Half of the world's geothermal features are in Yellowstone and fueled by the ongoing volcanism.



Geysers in the morning

Alex, Geri and I departed in the cool of the third morning to head to Steamboat Springs Colorado. On climb out we were treated to a view of about 20 geysers giving off steam in the morning air. Flying over the park and those mountains certainly helped put everything in perspective, at least for me; but enough philosophy.

The trip to Steamboat was beautiful with large mountains on all sides but a wide, low (6000 feet) valley under us for part of the flight. We traveled through the Togwotee pass at 9658 feet, which by this time was almost routine, and we landed on a hilltop airport in Steamboat: elevation 6882 and 4452 feet long.



Alex the cat-whisperer

We were promptly greeted by Ted, the airport cat. Tom Berge, Matt Adams, his son Noah, Mark Erickson, Bruce Fishbeck and Tom Court stayed back in Yellowstone for the day fishing or going on another tour of the park. Two young ladies picked up Tom and Bruce and together they toured the park. Airplane guys have a certain mystique about them, which makes us irresistible! They arrived in Steamboat about 8:00 in the evening. The Flying Dentists were having a con-

vention and there were no tie down spots left. Our group organized itself together and the next day we found a better solution.

Steamboat in the summer is magnificent with lots to offer. Our group went on hikes, took the gondola to the mountaintop for lunch or read a book. We missed the rodeo, as everyone was just too tired. The departure from Steamboat took off as a flight of five following the power lines over the mountain. After the second mountain range Tom Court and Bruce Fishbeck headed south to Denver to meet up with more friends; the rest of us headed home with one last group gas stop in Valentine, NE. On the final leg home, we split up and headed to our home airports.



It was a great trip that provided an opportunity to see beautiful scenery, meet new friends, and expand our flying skills. Thanks again to Tom Berge for organizing the trip and making sure we had the skills necessary for a safe flight.

Participants:

Tom Berge RV-7A
 Alex and Geri Peterson RV-6A
 Bernie Weiss RV-9
 Bruce Fishbeck and Tom Court RV-6A
 Brian Willcox and son, Robbie RV-9A
 Jim Koltavy and Jim (friend) RV-9A
 Mark Erickson RV-9A
 Vince and Nona Bastiani RV-7
 Matt Adams and son Noah RV-8

Minnesota Wing – Van’s Air Force
65 15th Ave. SW
New Brighton, MN 55112-3454

First Class

Twin Cities RV Builders Fall Family Picnic and Fly-In

Sunday, September 15, 2013, eatin’ starts at 12:30 pm

Sky Harbor Air Park (1MN8)

N44 31.7, W093 19.5, FGT (115.7) 218 degree radial, 9.0 nm, CTAF: 122.9

Cass Trail, Webster, MN 55088



It’s that time again!! Seems like our summer went in a flash, but it’s never finished without our annual fly-in and family picnic. No big changes from the past. Our location is the same as last year and our hosts Kim and Roy Fuhrmann and the Sky Harbor folks welcome you and your family. Please bring a salad or dessert to share. Fly-ins welcome!! Unicom on 122. Details on the website at www.mnwing.org

Directions:

Minneapolis, south on I-35. Exit at the Elko, New Market exit. East on Cty Rd 2 then south on Cty From Rd 46. Then west on Cty Rd 3. You will cross I-35. Take the second entrance to Sky Harbor (Cass Trail). Follow the driveway to the Fuhrmann’s on the left. You can’t miss it!

If lost, please call Doug at 651-398-1184