



RVator's Log

Newsletter of the Twin Cities RV Builder's Group

December 2020

In this issue...

News, news, news	...2
What are members are building	...3
A Tom's Life	...4

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Upcoming Events

There will not be winter meeting due to the COVID-19 threat. Hopefully we will meet again soon!

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On the back page of one of my logbooks I've kept a running tally of the different models of aircraft I have flown over the years. This summer I finally got to fly an RV-12 (thanks Mark Owen!) which was number 109.

I got to looking over this list and recalled some of the truly nice flying machines. Of course at the top are all the RVs for their superb handling (of course you know that!). The Boeing 757 will always have a place in my heart having racked up over 7000 hours in that powerful people hauler. But then again, there were several could best describe as "unique." Yep, there was the Cubette, which was a 2/3 scale single place Piper Cub replica. Or the Waco UPF-7 that I dare not land on pavement as it would turn around and bite me. Or the twin-engine Champion Lancer with two screaming 100 hp Continentals with fixed gear and fixed pitch props (climbed at 90, cruised at 90, landed at 90). Even a Quicksilver ultralight with ailerons controlled by the rudder pedals!



One standout was a tri-geared Helio Courier. One of my instrument students back in Dayton (and also my best friend) had a 60-acre farm. Larry wanted an airplane that he could fly off a 1000-foot airstrip in his backyard and his Cessna 182 wouldn't hack it. Digging around in Trade-A-Plane turned up something that might work: a Helio Courier. And it was a tri-gear of which they had only built 19.

Larry bought it and got training at Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) in South Carolina. JAARS provided training and support for missionary pilots and was the go-to place for all things Helio. When he returned he was pretty adept at slow flight, canyon-flying, and REALLY short-field landings. He built a steel hangar for it on his farm and the Helio had a new home.

I got a chance to fly it a couple times and it proved to be a strange but very capable airplane to haul 4 people out of a 1000-foot strip. Power was a 295 horsepower geared Lycoming that made lots of noise! The Helio is BIG... 3400 pound gross weight and built

like a tank. Certainly designed to live in the bush. It has huge nearly full-span flaps with stubby ailerons with spoilers and freewheeling leading edge slats. I remember my first takeoff with Larry out of his farm strip. 1000 feet did not look at all long enough as I lined up with the mowed grass. Put down half flaps, feed in the power, scream across the grass for about 500 feet and rotate at 50 mph. The massive leading edge slats bang down as they grab all available air molecules and you leap off the ground with



The Helio on the farm

plenty of room to spare. Flaps up, climb out at 80 and then level off at altitude. Cruise is only around 110 knots since it is not designed for cruising. That big Lycoming gulps about 15 gph. Handling is rather heavy but the fun part is when you slow down. Hang on the wing at 50 mph, roll into a bank and the slats bang down again driven by a high angle of attack. Sometimes one slat goes down before the other one (now that is weird but doesn't seem to cause any ill effects.) The turning radius seems like about a hundred feet. Heading back to the farm, we set up on final at 50 mph with the big bomber, power on approach. Motor up to the fence, chop the power and it quits flying and we're stopped easily in 500 feet. Certainly an amazing machine. In fact Helios were cranked out in many different forms. The military used them in Viet Nam as did the CIA. A few were built with a PT-6 turbine engine and there even was a twin Helio!



Helios are built tough but not a match for a F4 tornado

Larry and his wife Bev continued to keep the Helio in the hangar on the farm and we stayed in touch occasionally after we moved here. He passed away in 2015 and I lost track of what happened to the airplane until I got an email from his son Evan last year. In June, a tornado went through the farm property, damaging the home and completely demolishing the hangar. The Helio had not been flown in years and was essentially shredded into scrap. Fortunately Bev was in the basement and was not hurt. A sad end to a very rare machine. Glad I got to fly it!

News, news, news

It's December and COVID life doesn't seem to be getting a lot better. Our in-person meetings are on indefinite hold and our pancake runs are few and far between. But all is not doom and gloom. Here's some good news...

Welcome to new members this summer!!

Doug Dunston recently moved to St. Paul from New Mexico and has based his RV-9A at Anoka.

Pete Reese lives in River Falls, WI and has jumped into a RV-9 empennage kit. His riveting skills are ramping up quickly.

Dennis Harm of Cadott, WI is interested in building an RV-14.

Kirk Barlow is an ag pilot and has just moved to Hollandale, MN from Colorado. His new home has a large shop and he

hopes to build an RV-14. He is an A&P mechanic but does not yet have any homebuilding experience.

Stephen Adkins in Bloomington, MN is looking to build an RV-12 and will be starting his flight training soon.

Kristofer Schneider from Otsego, MN is hoping to build an RV-9 or -14.

Balaji Thiagarajan in Apple Valley, MN has not yet started building but is interested in an RV-10.

Matt Husemann and Sarah Hilton from Eagan, MN. Matt writes: *Hello, looking to purchase an RV-8 kit around the 1st of the year. I am based out of Fleming Field and own an older Cessna 182. My wife Sarah is currently working on her private certificate and I am working on my instrument rating and we are both excited to start building our very own RV-8 (even though neither of us has sat in one). We are hoping to meet other local RV builders and to learn all we can.*

John Shanks of Savage, MN has recently started a RV-9 tail kit.

Andrew Johnson of Prior Lake has just started a RV-7A tail kit and is happy to join the group.

Ben Hessenius is working on his RV-8 wing kit in Zumbrota, MN.

It's great to see these new folks on board (membership is now 276!!). Hope to match names to faces someday soon.

Congrats to RV-12 builder and now pilot **Mark Owen** for completing his light sport training and passing his checkride last month. He started in May and logged some serious training from **Tom Berge** this summer flying every chance they had.



John Van Endenburg reports his has just passed 100 hours on his RV-4 (ah, the best of the RVs!!) Here's a photo of his campsite in Isle, MN this summer.



What our members are building

- Jerry Altman as told to Frank Huber

My son, Nathen, who is a pilot for Delta, tipped me off to RV's a few years ago, so I started doing research from there and decided on an RV-7. After three and one half years working on this project, I still have not actually flown in any RV aircraft. I hope to do that with Frank Huber in his RV-7A as soon as things settle down with Covid-19.



I started the tail section in June of 2017 with zero experience building aircraft. This is mostly a scratch built plane. I did buy a quick build fuselage kit, which I am very happy with. But the rest is scratch built. I'm a long way from completing this project and currently working on the cowling. I would say the toughest part so far has been the canopy. Splitting it, gluing it, and finishing the forward intersection of the plexiglass and aluminum with fiberglass was tough, mostly because I had done zero work with fiberglass previously and because it takes a lot of time and patience to get it right.



Jerry Altman and his RV-7A

The cowling is also a tough project because there doesn't seem to be any datums to measure off from. It just hangs out there in space and has to line up with the engine and spinner. The instructions say to attach the prop and spinner and build the cowling around it. That did not work for me. I fitted the top cowling per the instructions and then formed the lower cowling to fit the top. But the assembly would not quite line up with the spinner back plate. I was at a standstill for a long time and finally called Doug Weiler who was nice enough to drop by and give me some advice. He also brought over a homemade tool, which lines up the cowling to the engine. I had to remove the prop and mount this plate tool and now the top cowl lines up nicely with the engine. But I may have filed

off too much off the lower cowl, because I have huge gaps on the horizontal seams, where the piano hinges are supposed to go. I may yet have to re-order the cowling and start over. I should have talked to Doug before I started this part. Lessons learned....



Jerry's shop

I have installed Dynon servos in the wing and fuselage, so I will go with the Dynon autopilot and HDX monitors. I will likely fit the panel for light IFR initially, with future expandability cut in the panel. I have not decided on the nav/com yet. It will likely be a Garmin. Avidyne is nice but over my budget. I decided to use a new Lycoming YIO-360-EXP212 180 hp Thunderbolt Engine and Hartzell with controllable pitch prop combo from Van's. Took almost a year to receive the engine, so if you're interested in this engine, get your order in early.

I am currently only VFR rated, but hope to eventually get my IFR ticket. I intend to use the plane for mostly cross-country flights to see my grand kids in Georgia. I currently live near Roberts Wisconsin, so my choices for a base of operation are the New Richmond or Lake Elmo airports, depending where I can find hanger space. My son helps me on occasion, when he has time to make the trip up from Atlanta, which is not very often. My son and daughter-in-law are both pilots for Delta and have three children. They are the proud owners of a Bonanza A36, which is a wonderful aircraft. They will eventually inherit the RV.



Jerry lives on 70 acres with a mile long driveway. Yes, he does have some serious snow removal equipment!

I still have a long way to go and have not started any of the avionics install yet, so I will have to start saving up for those items. It will likely be another 3 years before this bird flies assuming everything goes according to plan and I can find hanger space. I try to do a little something every day.

A TOM'S LIFE – part 4 conclusion

- Tom Irbeck

Editor note: It's been almost two years since we lost our good friend Tom Irbeck in a sailplane accident in Florida. Last fall club member Dale Field had the pleasure of meeting Tom's sister Gloria and she gave him a copy of this narrative that Tom authored just a year before his death. It's story of a life full of adventure growing up in Minnesota and a life intertwined with aviation. It's a long but pleasant read so it will be divided into four installments. Here is the final installment. Kick back and enjoy....



The 1968 cruise was long, fast, and busy. We had one crew got shot up, but made it to the water, where they got picked up. We lost 15 aircraft on this cruise, and lost 5 who were killed, 6 POW, and the rest picked up. The day our crew got shot down, I went up on the deck to get 8mm movie of them getting out of the helio. As I was filming someone yelled, an aircraft just crashed on downwind. I panned over to the water, the chute was in the water about ½ mile off our port side. Unfortunately, the pilot, a very close friend of Schenck was trying to land his damaged A-4.



The engine quit, and he ejected too late, the chute didn't have time to fully open. His name was Lcdr Pete Paine. He was from Rochester MN. I also knew him, but not as well as Schenck. He and Schenck had been friends for many years. He was an only child. Schenck and I would go to Rochester MN, and have lunch with his mother around 30 yrs. Later. She was 90 yrs. old at that time, and doing quite well. Rochester MN, has a special memorial to Pete. His mother had erected there a site for military personnel who were lost in combat. It was a memorable trip, and makes me realize how great a country we have, and how fortunate I am to still be here.

We were due to head home on June 27th, and my two combat cruises would be over. Our last day for flight ops, was June 26th. Things always get a little funny, when talking about your last days, not to get bagged so late in the game. June 24th was a tough day for me, and for the family of Lt. Nick Carpenter. He was flying his A-6 on a night mission around Vinh, not the worst place to be, because it wasn't known as a real "Hot Spot". They were on a low level mission, that only the A-6's could do, 250 ft. at 450 kts, when they got hit by flak. They believe Nick was killed instantly, but somehow, the BN got out, and was a POW until 1973. I knew Nick well. He had just had a little boy a couple of months before, and was looking forward to seeing his son. I sent a "special" letter to his wife, letting her know he was a good friend. It was a tough letter to write. Naturally Schenck and I took one of the last missions scheduled, nothing too special, bombed a road and gun sight. A lot of the married guys stayed on deck, and the bachelors flew, just something you do.

Schenck and I had some talks about what I wanted to do. He thought I would have a good chance to make Captain, and a great Navy career and would probably get a squadron CO. Didn't know if I was going to make the Navy a career yet. Had said, if I bagged a MIG, getting a name for yourself helped advance you down the road, would have stayed in. Schenck said there were two prime spots for me, one as an instructor back in the RAG at Miramar, or a Blue Angel slot. Steve Shoemaker, a good friend of mine wanted the Blue Angle slot, so he and I had a beer or two, and I decided to take the RAG VF-121 slot, which in the end, was a great choice. "Fate is the Hunter!!"

Didn't have to report to my new job at VF-121 until August so I went home for a couple of weeks. It was good to see family again. Mom was rather happy to see me, think she went to

mass every day for me while I was on cruise. Told her it worked, didn't it?

Soon I was on my way back to start my new job, at the RAG VF-121 in San Diego. Fortunately for me, they were looking for a Weapons Officer, which I was qualified, and which I really enjoyed. We were pretty busy, still turning out fighter pilots. When I checked in with the Skipper, he smiled, and said, you know, you're the most junior pilot to every had been an instructor here. I was a Ltjg and 25 years old. Most of the pilot instructors were 30-35, career Navy guys and married. Also, most were career Navy men, a pretty sharp group of pilots, over 75% had combat experience. Usually, new instructors do check outs, but because of my weapons experience, didn't have to do the boring first flights with new F-4 pilots. I was needed teaching bombing, rockets and missile check outs which was much more fun. Have one fun story about being a junior instructor. Almost every month, I would go over to Yuma Arizona for 10 days, as that is where we practiced bombing in the "Chocolate Mountain Range".

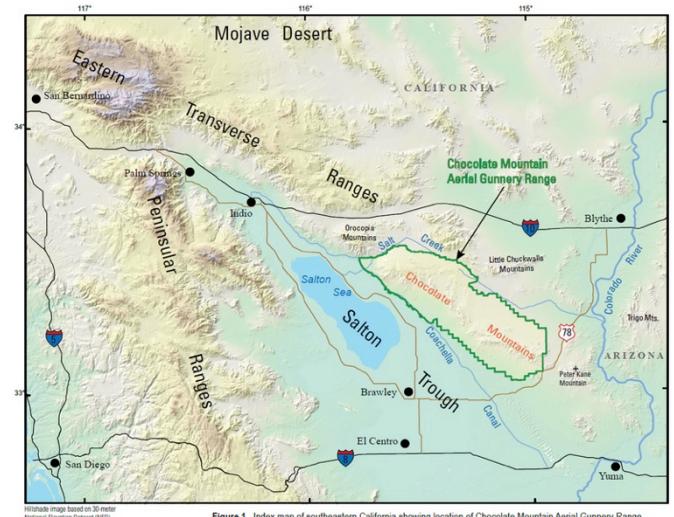


Figure 1. Index map of southeastern California showing location of Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range.

It was also a Marine base, and many of the Marine squadrons also used this for bombing practice and training. One of the Marine A-6 squadron instructors knew our senior instructor, and challenged him to a "dual". Select the 3 best Navy students against his three best A-6 students. We were to each to drop 12 practice bombs, and see who had the best scores. The Marines were all 1st Lt's, and our Op's officer picked two new students and me because I was only a Ltjg. They thought I was a "Newbie". Well, my score was, let's say, luckily very good, which brought our average score better than theirs, and we won the bet, free beer and drinks for the night at the O'Club. A few months later, a Marine instructor who knew me, found out that I had been "loaded" into the contest, and word was out that someone had cheated. They knew I held the record for "CEP of 6 ft. for practice bombs" (Center Error Probability) in the F-4 at that time. We almost got into a fight later when the squadron instructors came back, but they said I was a Ltjg competing, with their 1st Lt's. They didn't like us!! All is fair in beer bets!

I'm not sure on the exact date, the fall of 1968 but do remember the day when I saw a new pair of legs go into my office!

It was around 0800, we had gotten back from a practice bombing hop, and needed to debrief. We had launched around 0600, a little over a 1.3hr hop. Two crews and myself were just entering the briefing room, and down the hall, was my office. I noticed, Ltjg Beckhart, one of our WAVE's with a new set of legs, another WAVE, going into my office. I told the crew, wait here a minute, I have to go to my office and see what is going on. When I walked into my office area, there was a new face; a cute ensign was being showed around. I naturally had to introduce myself and get her name, Katy Carlson. Well, I threw in my invite to help her feel at home and said, "Stop over at the Officer's Club this afternoon, and I'll buy you a beer". Had another hop that morning, then my day was ending around 1500, so was heading to the O'club for a beer. I saw the new Ensign, and mentioned I'd see her at the bar for a beer.



Naturally, she couldn't resist not going to the O'Club for a beer with me. When she arrived, I got her a beer and we continued to update each other, where we came from and family info. A little while later a young lady came around selling tickets for the "Wives Club". It was a beautiful painted picture of La Jolla Beach, by a well know artist in the area. I pulled out 5 dollars to buy five tickets. Naturally, to put her name on them, but I had forgotten her name, so I had to ask her "What is your name again?". Well, you might be right when she gave me a funny look, but said "Katy Carlson". I have a lot of excuses for forgetting her name, none worth a shit!" It was a long day, worked hard, had a lot on my agenda, the beer killed that brain cell! Anyway, she must have forgiven me as she gave me her phone number. Well, guess who won the picture, Ensign Katy Carlson!

It is hanging on the wall above the fireplace in our new home in Bayport MN, a special memory of our first meeting date. We started seeing each other away from work. Remember going to her apartment, and her sewing machine wasn't working right, so helped her clean it, and then worked good. We got along good. The more I saw her, the more I realized that

she was really a nice, responsible, sensible person. I hadn't really thought about that before, when dating. What also got my attention, one time she asked me what I was doing with my money? Well, I put it in my checking account, and spend it. Once again I think I got "the look". Followed by you should be saving some, not just spending it. Needless to say, I was thinking I'd better keep this one, and not screw it up. I even picked up some flowers for her, had never done that before. I really enjoyed being with her. I have since realized, she was one of the best things that became part of my life.

In the fall of 68, a report came out, that our fighter pilot "kill" ratio against the enemy aircraft was only 2.5 to 1. Why was this ratio so low? During WWII, it was around 11 to 1. Some of the older pilots in the squadron started having some serious discussions about what should be done. I was invited to join this group and at that time it was call "Fighter Weapons School", later to be renamed "Top Gun".

A couple of MIGs, a 17 and 21 had been acquired through Israel, and we learned a lot about their flight characteristics. We also got much more aggressive in "dog fighting" training. The F-4 had been designed to be a high speed interceptor, and the close in work had been neglected by many. Fortunately for me, Schenck was a real fighter pilot, and he and I had many simulated "dog fighting" flights, so my experience was recognized. Lcdr Dan Pederson was in charge. I knew Dan well, as he had been one of our pilots on my two cruises with VF-92. Dan and I hadn't socialized much; he was around 10 yrs. older and married. I personally was not a big fan of Dan, as he was a "Me" guy, but was a good talker, smooth in politics and good at promoting the new program. Steve Smith, an RIO was Dan's second hand man, and was a good friend of mine, and would be the best man at our wedding. There were 18 of us that got the program rolling. It took some extra time and effort for all.



Tom Irlbeck, fourth from left in back row.

Our first group of pilots trained under some of our new techniques and graduated in January of 1969. It would go on to be a great help, as after 69, the kill ratio went to around 12 to 1 kill ratio. A big success in a small amount of time, with a

great deal of effort. In the summer of 69, I was deep selected, and got to put on my Lt bars. At the time, I was asked if I wanted to go regular Navy, and I turned it down. This meant I would probably not stay in the Navy. I had seen the amount of time that was expected of a person to be a good Navy man. It was too much. When it came to being away from family, this made me think twice, because sea duty was to be expected. I think Katy would have been a great Navy mother, but I didn't like the idea of not being around for the kids.

In the spring of 69, Katy and I had a fun trip to Brown Airfield, CA. I had seen an ad in the paper to take a ride in a glider. I asked Katy if she wanted to go for a glider ride, and being the adventurous, spontaneous woman that she was, she said sure, so we put the top down on the Corvette and had a nice drive south toward Mexico. Brown Field is only 20 miles SE of San Diego and is only 1.5 miles north of the Mexican border. Tijuana Mexico is only 5 miles to the SW. Flights in the area were interesting, as we had to make sure not to enter the Mexican airspace. My log book says it was March 1st, 1969. They had a commercial glider club there, flying a Schweitzer 2-33, a two place trainer, and a Schweitzer 1-26, a single place glider, which at that time was a pretty new model and just 3 or 4 yrs old. Katy went up first and when she came down, I asked her how she liked it, and she said it was OK, but I could sense she was not going to be a glider pilot.



I then took a flight, and really liked it, so scheduled some more flights later that week. Eventually, after 6 instructional flights I soloed, and did some soaring in the local area. We were rather busy with the new Fighter Weapons School, and I have noted that I made 13 flights, and then waited 44 years before I would get back to the glider world and soaring.

Bye this time, Katy and I were seeing a lot of each other. We made a trip to my home in MN, and the family loved her. We then made a trip to her home in Bellevue WA to meet her folks, and let them know, we would be getting married soon. I was impressed with her parents. Katy was a lot like her mother Win, conservative, and very nice. Her Dad, Walt and I got along very good as he had been a Navy man, and had retired from the Navy. The poor guy had been in a house with 5 women, and now he had another man in the house. I was the first guy to come along with one of his daughters. We did some fishing together and he was a great salmon fisherman. I

would also help him build a cabin home on the Pacific Ocean. We worked well together, and had fun together.

We got married on September 20th, 1969 at the NAS Miramar Chapel, San Diego , CA. We had a full military wedding, I in my dress whites, Steve Smith best man, and brother Bob my groomsman. Katy had sisters Chris and Wyn, her oldest sister Amy was a teacher in Germany and couldn't make it. Both of our families made the wedding and had much fun. I think brother Paul, had a little more fun than he should have, as he didn't look well on wedding day. Didn't bother me. Katy and I went back to Miramar in 2016 to the Chapel. Unfortunately they had rebuilt it and did not have the same fond memories. It lacked the character it formally had, maybe just changed and not the same for us. We took off for a week, and honeymooned at Lake Tahoe.

In November of 1969, I put in my request to leave the Navy. A few people tried to talk me out of leaving, but I thought it was better to leave but it was a tough decision. The war was winding down. When I told Dan Pederson that I was leaving, he got perturbed at me for wanting to leave. He cut me off from the Top Gun group, no more flights for me there. This brought out some of his true colors, because I could no longer support him. I started contacting the airlines, so see what the job market was. It was a little harder for me, because I didn't have a college degree, a requirement for most. The two airlines I liked the most was Northwest and North Central. It is interesting about Northwest, as I took their "StayNine", a pre requisite test, and got too high of a score on it. They said I had cheated, and it disqualified me, which worked out great. If I had been hired, I probably would have been laid off with a group that was never recalled.

Katy had somehow gotten pregnant, and that made her getting an early discharge much easier. We were both discharged in December of 1969, and flew north to "God's Country", St. Paul MN. We stayed with Mom and Dad over Christmas, found a place to live, went back to San Diego to pack up, and drove back north to St. Paul. I didn't have an airline job, but could work construction with Dad at Lieberg-Peterson, as a laborer. We found a nice little two bedroom condo at 1414 Winchell St. in St. Paul.

Work slowed up in February, and I went on unemployment for a couple of months. I was still contacting the airlines, but hiring was a little on the slow side. I'd had an interview with North Central Airlines, and Louie Farrell and ex-Marine Fighter Pilot told me I would get hired in the summer, but could expect to get laid off, in the winter the first year. Louie was the Chief Pilot at North Central, and we had much in common, as the Navy trains the Marine Pilots. Now I was hoping that I would get a class date with North Central Airlines at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Money was a little tight, but we had some money in the bank, and lived well on what we had. Our little home was warm and fun.

Katy got along well with her pregnancy, and our first son would arrive on March 10th, 1970. We all couldn't have been happier, we had added a little boy to our family, and mother

was doing fine. We would name him Jonathan Thomas Irlbeck. Jon was an easy baby to raise, and Katy was a great mother, as Dad, it is a great responsibility when you look at a new defenseless baby in your house, and know he will be with you for the next 18 years or more.

Worked picked up in April and I was working with Dad as a tender. Our expenses were small, and bills could be paid. I knew I would not like to do this as a career but it put the food on the table. May is always busy in the construction field, and we had a big job in St. Paul. Someone contacted me on the job, said to call Katy, something about an airline job. I called Katy, it was early June, she said North Central called and had a class date for me. When I called North Central's Chief pilot, he informed me had a class date of June 22nd. It would be hard to put into words how relieved I was. I felt I was meant to be a pilot, more than a labor tender.

North Central was considered to be a small regional airline. In 1970 it had started to build its jet fleet, they had 13 DC-9-30's, and around 40 Convair 580's, a 48 passenger prop jet. There were 13 pilots in my class, about 50% were ex-military, and 50% civilian aviation pilots. Seniority is determined by age, I was 27 years old, and was fourth from the bottom. My seniority number was 422. They told us, expect to be laid off the first year, as they would normally have a reduction in flights for the winter schedule. That didn't bother me. North Central was a great place to be, a very friendly airline, and everyone seemed to get along with management.

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I would be a co-pilot on the Convair 580. The 1st year pay, while on probation was a whopping \$550/mo. I had been making around \$700/mo. on construction, so we learned to cut

back. The ground school was around a month long and then I was sent to Chicago, ORD as copilot on the Convair 580. The 580 was a good aircraft, a turbo-prop aircraft that carried 48 passengers and we had one flight attendant. It was a little heavy on the controls, and had two engines, each producing 4,000 horse power. We drove to Chicago in our International Scout and Katy in her Camaro. I had sold the 62 Corvette, and we found an apartment in Schaumburg, Illinois, NW of Chicago. Katy and I learned to live on the \$550 without taking anything out of savings. You might say, Jon was our biggest entertainment, and he learned to walk at 9 months. My old buddy, Dave Gray later informed me that Schelen Auto Electric had bought the lot and house next to their business for future expansion and they would give us a good deal on the rent. We discussed it, and decided to move back to St. Paul in January or February of 1971. It was an old two-story house with 3 bedrooms upstairs. It was in rough shape, but I was paid \$5 dollars and hour to clean it up, which was great for our limited budget. The house was on Marshall, just to the west of Snelling.

I now had to commute to ORD, but my buddy, Dix Anderson an ex-Navy helicopter pilot who also had been in my class, had an apartment, and let me bunk on the couch in the living room. I usually tried to bid overnight trips, and I just paid for the nights I stayed with Dix in the apartment, a cheap arrangement. Everything went pretty smoothly, made it through the probation, didn't get laid off due to a new route to New York that added flying time, and we now were in "fat city", making around \$1000/mo. Katy liked the location, we got some bikes, and put Jon on the back of the bike, and would go riding. That summer, Dix and I got back to MSP due to flight time increases. We would start looking for land, as things were looking up. We found some land south of Somerset for \$295/acre. We sold some stock that Katy's folks had given us, and Dix and I bought 80 acres from Bud Larson. Dix took the North 40, and I took the South 40.

Now Katy and I got busy, deciding how and what kind of a house we would build. We saw some plans that we liked at a local lumber yard, it was a two story English Tudor, stucco and cedar trim. We made a few minor changes on the plans, and started planning to build in the spring of '72. I would do the contracting. My Dad gave us a lot of suggestions, and we started lining up what needed to be done. When the ground dried up, around May, we dug the basement, and Dad and I put in the footings.

I hired Dad, Uncle Joe and Bob Oberg to lay the blocks and we were on our way. I was on reserve, and things weren't too busy, so put in long days getting carpenters, electricians, septic installation. Also, Katy's Dad had given us a 15' travel trailer that he wasn't using. Katy and Angela drove out to Seattle, and I flew out after work, to drive the Blazer with the trailer back to Wisconsin. It was a fun busy trip, but now we had a trailer on the property. Worked out great to nap Jon, relax and eat on site, while building the house. Somehow, Katy once again became pregnant. We were planning on a

four-bedroom house, so plenty of room for kids. We moved in around October. The plumber was running behind schedule, so for the first 2 weeks, we had no running water, no carpet, and the outside didn't even have the tarpaper over the built-rite yet. The plumber arrived, the well was in, and we were in our new home, a little rough but happy. I look back on how well Katy put up with the limited comforts, like no bathroom and shower but she never complained. I know I was more than just lucky to have a friend and wife that could tolerate some discomforts in our life. Our original builder's loan was for \$32,000. The next summer, we had the stucco put on, and I painted, cut and installed all the cedar trim, we got some carpet, but it still took a couple of years to get about 90% of the home finished. Dix Anderson would build a house on the North 40.

In the spring of 73, Katy was due to deliver our new arrival the end of March. Katy's folks, Walt and Wyn came out to help out around her due date. Our new arrival was taking "his" time, and was late. Walt had a meeting that he needed to attend, so left after a week or so, before we could add to our family. We sure were hoping they could help us celebrate and enjoy the new arrival, but that didn't work out right. I had taken some vacation also, but now went back to work. I had the feeling that it was going to be a girl, and was going to paint the room pink, but Katy thought it would be better to keep neutral, and we painted it yellow.

On April 10th, I was flying a trip between Kansas City and MSP, when we got a call on the company frequency, a message for me. The flight controller knew that my wife was expecting, and said he would let me know if anything happened. Well the controller said, "Congratulations, you have a new boy in your family". I really thought he was kidding, as I told him that I thought it was a girl, so I told him "to tell the truth!" He said it was the truth. Our little airline was almost like a big family, we all knew many of the staff, and it was truly a fun place to work. When we landed, the gate agent had the weight, length, arrival time, all the data for me and a telephone number to call Katy. A very memorable and happy time, Katy and Kevin were doing well. Jon had been an easy baby to raise, slept well, ate well, didn't need much attention. Kevin was the opposite. He didn't like to sleep, some things he didn't like to eat, Katy realized, maybe she didn't have the perfect mother technique down yet. Anyway, we joke now that Kevin made us realize that we would be happy with just two boys, no tries for the girl.



The next year, 1973 I would check out in the DC-9, and a pay raise. Little North Central Airlines was growing. We would visit our parents, and show off the boys, who were growing like weeds. The next couple of years would go by fast. Katy would go back to school in River Falls to get her teaching accreditation. We were getting a little extra money, I joined the Osceola Citabria Flying Club. Dewie and Tina Swenson became good friends. Phil and Diane Wakefield would build a home a couple of miles to the west of us. Our circle of friends was growing. We had a good-sized garden in the back yard, Katy was canning a lot of tomatoes. In 1976, Walt and Wyn with a group from Seattle were doing a bicycle ride across the US. We went down to Iowa and met up with them. On their way home they stopped off to visit. Walt loved eating tomatoes, and we had our usually, good crop of tomatoes. We went down to the garden and ate a couple, Walt couldn't put them down, he said, "Best tomatoes I've ever eaten". Probably had around 6, and the next day, acid sores around his lips, but I guess it was worth it.

In the spring of 76, I started building the airstrip in the back yard. Hired an excavator from New Richmond, had two D-8's. It took them 7 days, working 8-10 hrs. a day to level 1800'. Dan Lindstrom and I bought a 1955 C-180. We flew it to Alaska and made some money on it. I bought a 1946 BC-12D Taylorcraft and Dan Bought a 1952 Super Cub. A couple of years later, I was goofing off, doing a flyby when I accelerated stalled it low to the ground, it snapped rolled on me, just barely pulling out before I hit the ground, and flipped it. Blame the accident on my loss of weight and running. My blood pressure was low, and when pulling the G's, my tolerance was low, blacked out for a few seconds. Luck was on my side there. Brother Paul and I bought a 1956 Piper Tri Pacer and rebuilt it. Katy started student teaching.

The boys were growing up fast. Could tell Jon was a lot like me, when I was young. He enjoyed the outdoors, and was active in Scouting. Kevin enjoyed sports. Little League, and soon hockey would become his main activity. I was active with the Scout Troop, and enjoyed camping with the Scouts. Jon would make Eagle Scout. I also enjoyed hockey. Dan Daniels and I rebuilt a Zamboni in the hangar for the Somerset Hockey Association. Kevin would go on to play hockey for Mankato State University.

About this time I also got more involved with archery. The Chilkoot Bow Hunters, which owned 52 acres just a few miles to the west of our Wisconsin home was a great club, and shot archery once a week there. I would be on the board for a few years, and serve as President for a number of years. Would end up shooting a number of deer on the property. Jon would also shoot a deer with a bow when he was 13. Brothers Bob and Paul were also archers, and we had a fun trip to upper Quebec to go on a Caribou hunting trip together. Bob and I brought back a bull each. Brothers Bob and Paul were fun to go fishing with too, I even did a few golf courses with them.

In 1979 I checked out as Captain, which had just become Republic Airlines, when we bought Southern and Hughes Air West. We grew from a small regional, to a major airline. The

boys were doing well in school, Jon with his sax, Scouts and track. Kevin with football and his favorite sport, hockey. Katy became a full time teacher.

In 1980 we put in a tennis court in the back yard. It was well used, and 3 years I flooded it in the winter for a hockey rink. Also, in 1980 we decided we were going to do the RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa). We had just gotten into partnership with Jim and Lavonne Baillargeon, in the "Treadmill and the Pedal Mill" in the town of Somerset, and were expanding our bicycling experiences. Originally, Katy's mom and dad were going to join us on this ride too, but Walt had found out that he had cancer, and needed treatments, so they had to cancel. Amy and two friends planned to make the ride, and we met up in Omaha. The ride was originally scheduled for 495 miles, but we added on around 25, biking from Omaha to the starting point. It was warm during the ride, one of the days over 100 degrees F. We also had a day when we rode a "Century", 100 miles in a day. Kevin was 7 yrs. old, and was interviewed as being the youngest on the ride. Jon was 10. The boys did great.

In 1981 we lost Katy's Dad to cancer. He had just began enjoying our boys, as they too loved the out of doors, biking and their cabin home on the Pacific, that I had helped build.

In 1982 we installed a Jacobs's 10kw wind generator. We will have it for 23 years, selling it before listing the house for sale.

1984 I lost a good friend Steve Stresse and his brother Al were killed in an aircraft accident by Siren Wisconsin. They flew into some icing conditions and lost control of the aircraft. Steve kept the Piper Pacer at our airstrip.

In October 13th of 1985, my Dad, Henry A. Irlbeck died as the result of a car accident on Hwy 61. Mom was also injured, but Dad died of his injuries. He was 67 years old. On the 12th, they were driving north when a van crossed over into their lane to miss a car that had slowed up, striking Dad's car heavily in the front end. Mom and Dad were not wearing their seat belts. Dad was actually doing pretty well the night after major surgery, but a fatty embolism to the lung caused respiratory arrest, and that got him in the morning. It was hard for us all, Dad had been a great father, and grandfather and he is missed. Sister's Gloria and Angela were a great blessing to Mom, as they were the ones that helped Mom the most, to adapt without Dad.

In 1986, when Jon was 16, he became interested in obtaining his pilot's license. We had flown together many times, and I had encouraged him to fly the aircraft, and noted, he was a "natural". I stated to him that if we started flight training, he take it seriously, and complete his pilot's license. It was enjoyable to pass on my knowledge of flying, and I was very proud of how well he did. We were flying my Cessna 180, a high performance aircraft, and needed a little more attention than the normal training aircraft. Also, it is a tail dragger, and requires more attention to directional control, than the simpler

tricycle geared aircraft. After he soloed, he and I would have to compete for aircraft time, so it was only natural, that I find an aircraft for him to fly, and build time. I bought a Piper Pacer, and it worked out great for advancing his aircraft flight time. He went on to become a commercial ATP pilot.

Time goes on. Jon and Kevin go on to college.

Kevin's world of hockey experiences got him to play Juniors, and eventually, get selected to play for Mankato State University. I had the best of both worlds, I enjoyed hockey, and I enjoyed flying. One son was a pilot, and one son played hockey. Fortunately for me, Katy tolerated both, but I knew she wasn't as enthusiastic as I was, which is OK. When Kevin was a senior, I made all 34 games that Mankato played as a Division one school. It was a great year.

Both of our sons find the nicest ladies in North Dakota and Minnesota, and get married. We are so fortunate to have 5 grandkids, Michael, Emily, Avery, Mya and finally Wyatt to brighten our days and nights.

The summer of 1996, I retire early from Northwest Airlines (Northwest bought Republic Airlines in 1985) at the age of 53 after 26 years of flying in the airlines. I helped to build the Somerset Hockey Arena. Another busy summer.

1997 I would order a Van's RV-8 and start building it. It would take 2yrs, 2month and 10 days to complete. Brother Paul helped me finish it. Thanks Paul.

In 1998 we buy property in Cape Coral, Florida for Katy. 1999 Katy's Mom, Wyn dies and our first grandchild, Michael is born, soon to be followed by 3 more girls, and one more boy. 1999 our Florida Home is completed. Katy and I become "Snowbirds" in 2003 and Florida Residents.

June 2000, would make the first flight on my new RV-8, "Bear".



On May 25th, 2009 at the age of 90, my mother died. She had been getting a little weaker, and had contracted pneumonia. It would weaken her. The morning that she died, I was with her. Gloria had been spending quite a bit of time at the hospital.

All the kids had been taking turns staying with her, as we could see her time was winding down. I told Gloria to go home and I would take the 12 midnight to the 8 o'clock morning shift. Early in the morning, her breathing became labored. I held her hand until she stopped breathing around 4 o'clock in the morning.

Sometime in 2012, my grandson Michael and I were talking flying. I don't remember if we were actually flying, as he and I flew together a number of times, but he asked if I had ever flown gliders. I talked about flying in a glider with his grandmother in San Diego, back in 1969, and I really enjoyed them. He mentioned he would like to fly in a glider, so I now can blame my grandson, for getting me back into the soaring world, which I truly enjoy. It must have been close to our heading for Florida, because when I got down to Cape Coral, I started looking around for glider clubs. Lucky for me, the Everglades Soaring Association had their club at the LaBelle, Florida Airport. It is around 45 miles east of Cape Coral. I joined the club in January of 2013. That renewed my love of soaring, got my commercial glider rating, and also my instructor rating in gliders. I also joined the Red Wing Soaring Association in Osceola, Wisconsin, the same club my Brothers Bob and Paul had belonged to many years before me. Since that time, I've logged almost 300 hrs. and over 400 flights in gliders. Thank You Michael!



2015 we sell our Wisconsin home of 43 years. Move into our Minnesota home at 239 2nd Street N., Bayport, MN 55003 in May of 2016. 2017 Katy and I will celebrate our 48th year of marriage.

In so many ways, I am thankful to have been born in the United States to two loving and caring parents that guided and encourage me in so many ways. I was more than fortunate to have two great sisters, Gloria and Angela, also two fun brothers, Bob and Paul to share hunting and fishing and flying stories with on many occasions. Our two sons and their families have completed many dreams and hopes of success for our future generations. We are so proud of their achievements. And not last or not least, to have met the love of my life, Katy. To share our life with you and your families will be a lasting gift that is greatly appreciated by us.

To be continued by our loving sons, their wives and children.

Love, Dad, Grandpa, Bubby Tom