

Building my RV12 – N325NK

By Mark Owen

My story begins at the Stanton Airport in mid- 2012 where I was watching the gliders do their magic with my wife Naomi and our red Mustang. Next to us was another couple also observing the activities. As usual at airport gatherings, conversation begins and my new acquaintance asked me about the red color of my car – the actual Ford color including its part number. I was curious and had to ask why and he said that the red color of my car was exactly what he wanted to paint his not quite finished Vans RV8 airplane.

I was interested! As an engineer with Lockheed Martin, I designed mission display generators for the Navy, Airforce and Marines - primarily airborne systems that provided a connection to the flying community so the itch had been there for most of my career. With both a busy work and home life, I did not jump in and get flying experience, not a single hour of flight time – I was truly at ground zero. Now back to my story...

Up to this point, I had no knowledge of the Van Aircraft series of planes and that they were constructed with excellent CNC and supporting documentation that anyone who was stubborn enough could build one themselves. I was hooked. My new friend is none other than Christer Stenstrom (systems guru at SteinAir Inc.) and with his excellent salemanship I couldn't wait to find out more about the Light Sport RV12.

There was another nudge a month later – my son and I went to a wedding in Portland OR and had time to visit the Van's facility in Aurora to score a test flight in their demo RV12. Of course the ride convinced me to go ahead and get started. (The left seat is my son Ryan looking much more like the aviator than his old man).



Late 2012, the tail kit arrived with the box of 12,000 L4-3 rivits – yikes!



Given that a 2 car garage contains at least 1 car in the challenging winters in Minnesota, I got inspired to clear out and equip my basement junk room.

With new paint and lots of lighting



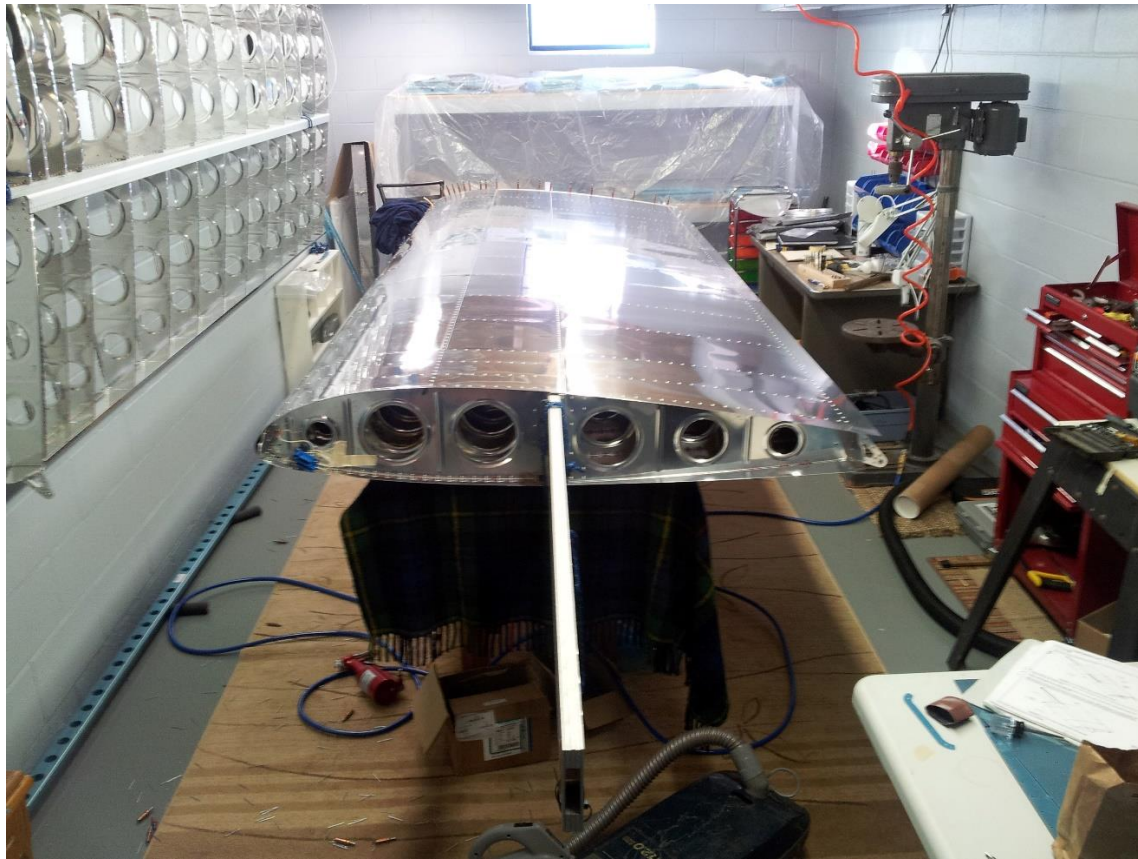
After adding tools and table:



The tail kit finally ended up in the garage after assembly.



Wings came next, they filled up my build room.



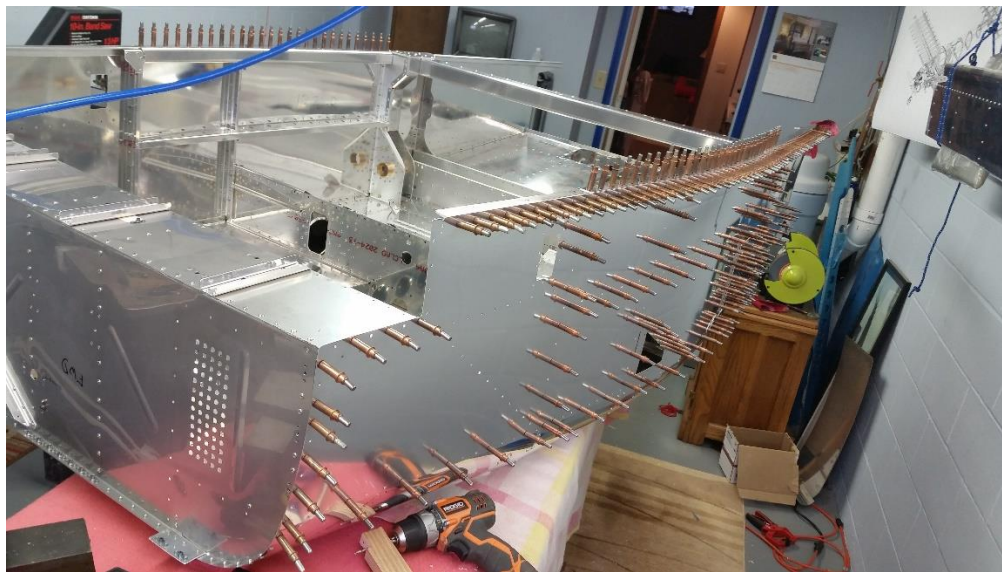
Making sure the wing can indeed fit through all passages and stairway, the path was tested prior to riveting the skins to the framework. I think a wing makes a great conversation piece! Naomi may have a slightly different opinion...



After assembly, they had to make their way to the garage through a maze of 2 rooms, a stairway, out the back door through the snow and round to the front of the garage and into their ceiling storage spots.



The chassis had to be rotated and carried out sideways to get it from the build room to that garage.



My father Delvin is inspecting my work and providing advice to hang the fuelage so the plumbing can be easier to install. He is 96 presently and being a WWII Navy PBM driver, an interested party to be sure.



The process continues with the other 3 kits – finishing, powerplant and avionics.

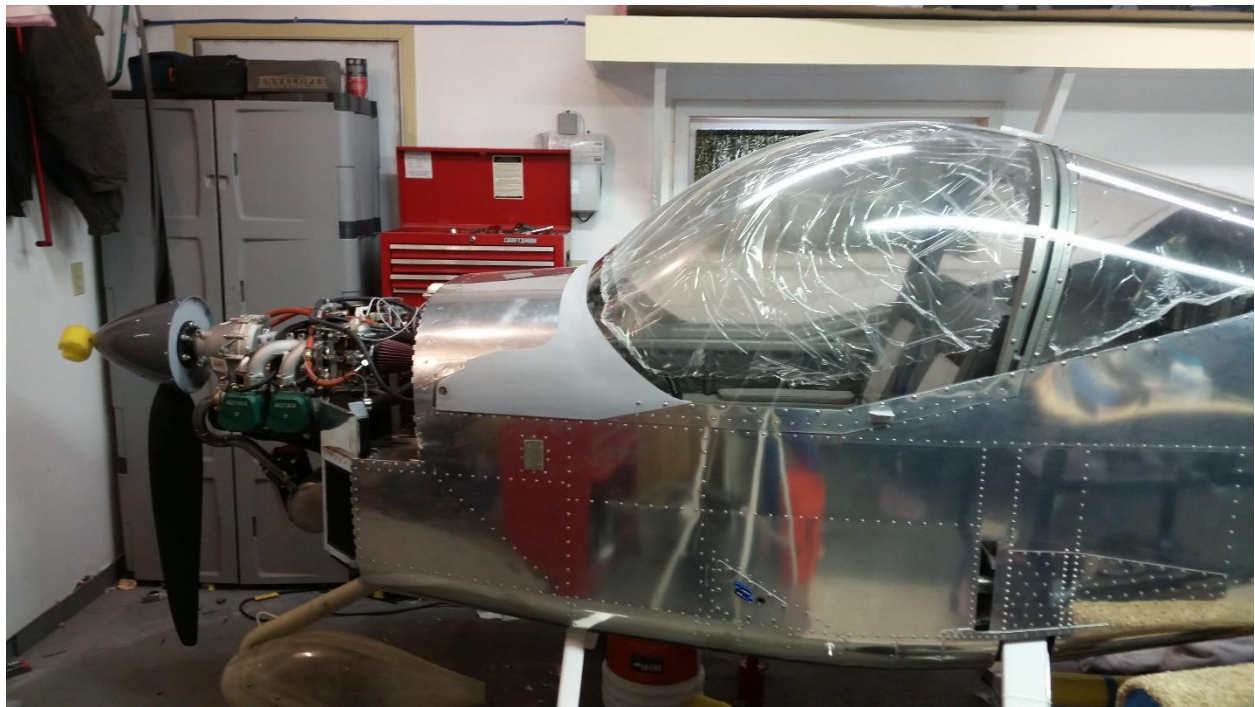
The engine being attached:



There are times you just truly need another set of hands and Naomi has been my go-to assistant – with an eye for detail which is much appreciated. Here she is with the canopy drilling steps, providing excellent backing and thankfully, not claustrophobic.



Finally, the plane starts to look like there is an end in sight.



Getting the wings to the airport required an enclosed UHaul truck, they arrived safely in the rack awaiting the rest of the package.



A few months later, the fuselage was delivered by a tow truck. The driver was as much a first timer at plane transporting as I was. He did great!



So, now that the parts are all together, here it is ready for flight with upholstery and a promise for paint.



First flight and flight tests performed by Tom Berge a few months ago and he bravely continues to teach me the art of flying.



And it wouldn't be a complete story without the RV grin – 7 years of building adventure, truly a fascinating process with lots of support from Tom, Doug, Kevin Knutson, the Van's Support line and many encouraging tips and advice from EAA members – Thanks!! The adventure continues...

