

WHY I'M BUILDING A FLYING MACHINE

From Tim Kline, EAA240 Member and Aircraft Builder

I have been asked that from time to time, the answers one could hear are as plentiful as the stars, but for me it was too see if I could.

I have worked in the Aerospace business for 30 years repairing and overhauling fuel systems for turbine engines. It began when I was 20 years old. I was a young boy with an aptitude for things mechanical, in other words I knew instinctively which direction to turn a screwdriver and a wrench. One of my first teachers at this new job was an older gentleman getting ready to retire. Walter, an A & P mechanic pilot and all around skilled tinkerer.

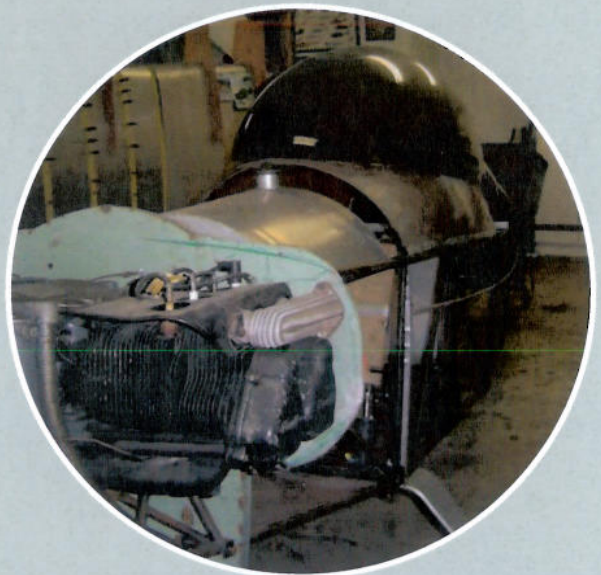
As Walter taught me how to Overhaul and repair fuel systems he began to open up and tell me of some of his projects. He showed me a picture of an old Cessna 120 he used to own and fly, and another picture of a bi-plane he had built and sold but never flew it. Walter showed me another picture of a 1930's Cord Speedster. Walter wasn't restoring this car he was building it from scratch, and not only that he scaled it down to 2/3 it original size. Walters garage was sparse, an Oxy Acetylene torch, drill press, and a lathe, and a few simple hand tools. I was amazed at what he had accomplished. Walter retired a year or so after, but I used to go up to his house for lunch to see what he was working on. Walter decided to build another airplane.

By now Walter is in his 70's, he was building a single seat Cub like airplane of which the name escapes me for now. The fuselage was welded up and on wheels, the wings were built and covered and laying up against the wall, the engine freshly overhauled by Walter himself hanging on the nose. Everything was pushed to the side of the garage and

a large table was constructed on the other side, where Walter was making his own propeller. I was simply enamored by this man and the things he could do. I didn't know it then but I had been bitten! Walter had the 40 hours of his airplane flown by a test pilot, and it was given a clean bill of health. I later learned that Walter went back got his medical, took a bit of duel refresher time and flew it himself. Still to this day I think of Walter and wonder.

Fast forward 25 years, after migrating from California to Pennsylvania my new place of employment next door to Chester County Airport. I went to the airport for lunch on several occasions and passed up that sign that all airports have. "Learn to fly here". On one day I got up the nerve to go ask the young lady at the FBO desk how one goes about it and she took me back to meet the Chief flight instructor. Steve sat down with me and spelled out the requirements to earn a Private Pilot Certificate along with the approximate numbers of how much it would cost based on the requirements of the FAA. He answered all my questions in detail and then asked if I would like to schedule an introductory flight. I of course said yes!

About a week went by and the day arrived, I showed up after work. We headed out to a relatively new Cessna Sky hawk, after the initial preflight we hopped in, I did not expect to be sitting in the pilot seat. We ran down the checklist one by one, flipped on the Master Switch only to find out it had been left on and the battery was dead. Steve walked back to the office and grabbed the keys to the Piper, another preflight and off we go! The ½ hour flight passed in what seemed like 10 minutes, in actuality I probably flew 20 of them but hardly can recount the experience. I signed up for flight training immediately after.



Like all things new, the training was exhilarating, and I would come home bubbling with stories of how it went and would tell anyone who would listen. My mother in California was my best audience. Flying was on my brain 24/7 and at times I think I talked about it so much (and sometimes still do) that people would yawn. I wanted my own plane in the worst way as I am sure all new wannabe pilots do. I looked at airplane advertisements daily, mainly at Cessna 152's as they seemed to be within my grasp and were the type I was training in.

Then started looking at kit planes but the costs were really not within my reach at the time. One day I stumbled upon an advertisement "Sonerai II L \$7,500.00" Not knowing what it was I googled the name and absolutely fell for the design. Sleek, fast and affordable! I later learned it was experimental which let me to the EAA world. The plane was located in Utah and I was already in contact with the owner and seriously considering a road trip with trailer to bring it home. Some pictures of the plane followed after some initial correspondence with the owner. Not knowing much it appeared to be a bit rough and I was told it was not really a beginner's plane. Still I kept researching the design, found a Forum group for the type www.Sonerai.net. a gold mine of information with current builders and pilots that have been flying them for over 20 years. I read everything.

**Homebuilders
Story!**

Eventually I stumbled across another ad for a Sonerai and it was located in PA only 45 minutes from my house. The original builder a welder by trade had gone west and his Estate was being sold. I contacted the Son in law and he told me the ad had only been out for two days and he had already received many calls, with showings requested. I made arrangements to get their first! I took two friends (airplane friends with me) to look it over. I got the yes nod from both of them, struck a deal with the owner, returned home picked up my trailer, went to the bank to get some doe and brought her home. An almost completed airframe, almost completed wing, landing gear and wheels, a vintage Franklin engine and various other parts. I think I spent the next 3 weeks in the garage (nearly forgetting that I had a family). See attached picture Sonerai II 015

Flight training progressed, I soloed, and worked on my plane, when my 3rd 90 day endorsement for solo was entered in my log book my instructor commented that this would be the last time. It then dawned on me I had let the airplane building take precedent over getting my pilot certificate, and if I continued down the path when finished with the plane I would have nothing more than a real nice "garage ornament" I laid down my tools, got my face back in the book and earned my pilot certificate a few months later.

When I first bought the project I figured I would be able to complete it within a year, after all just finish the wing build another wing, put an engine up there screw on a propeller attach the cowling, put in a couple of instruments in the cockpit and string a few wire's. Simple stuff, for any seasoned mechanic. That was March of 2008. LOL.



It seems like I have been at the 90% done with 90% to go stage for a long time now. Still I am asked quite often when it will fly and the best answer I can come up with is "When there is nothing left to do". Although, I still keep a goal date in mind.

One of the hardest things to contend with when a project has spanned many years is to keep up the momentum and the only way to do that is to try and get something done every day, even if it is just preparing a thought plan of work to be accomplished the next time you intend to work on it. The longer you walk away from it the easier it is to let it sit. Eventually everything gets stale and you forget exactly where you left off. Another thing is, stick as closely to the plan's as you can for every modification that you make to the design seems to have an unforeseen domino ripple effect.

Moving into the Landenberg Area has been great! I had been eyeballing the EAA Chapter 240 for some time, I could see it was an active chapter and I longed to be with airplane type people but it was just too far from where I was living. Several weeks after arriving I decided to make a visit to the Chapter and I'll never regret that. There are lots of nice people that I have come to know and there is a wealth of experience to draw from. The camaraderie is fantastic, and I am proud to be a member. My timing was perfect as Glen Long was just finishing up his plane and hangar space became available for me. Hopefully I'll be done sanding soon before everyone gets tired of me making dust, and flying when there is just nothing left to do.

Come out and enjoy the fun!

TIM'S MACHINE



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EAA NATIONAL CHAPTERS

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Each month over 1,000 local EAA Chapters around the world get together to enjoy the camaraderie of a group of people that share their enthusiasm for aviation. Monthly meetings and activities contain a variety of programs that focus on sharing ideas to make aviation safer and more FUN.

Chapters are about people. They bring together a group of individuals who enjoy

Go Fly!

the friendship of others and who are interested in learning more about aviation as well as sharing their own knowledge. Chapters are involved in a large variety of social and educational activities. There is something for everyone!

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Chapter Members Fly-In to the Grimes Aviation Museum



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More about EAA Chapter 240
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Our Award Winning web site!

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