

FREETIME

The Recorder's Weekly Feature of Sports/Hobbies/Pastimes/Recreation

Diane Tuman, Editor

Friday, April 3, 1981

Sport aviation

The Area is loaded with enthusiasts

Recreational aviation enthusiasts around Amsterdam. Surprised? I was.

The topic discussed in Freetime today was arrived at completely by accident. Last week, in an effort to write a Freetime on model railroading, I hit dead end after dead end.

The leads took me to the topic of sport aviation in which Amsterdam and the area is loaded with enthusiasts. An association that I never knew existed sprouted from nowhere — the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 602 in Fort Johnson where approximately 60 enthusiasts from the Amsterdam and upcounty area are members.

Many of the members have their own planes, or are in the process of building one, or are just aviation enthusiasts.

At the present time, the EAA, Chapter 602 is holding an aviation show at the Amsterdam Mall. Planes and portions of planes are on display, literature is available and movies are shown periodically. The display began on Monday and will continue until tomorrow. Take a few minutes off and come down to the mall and browse around — you'll be fascinated.

The following issue researches area people who are involved in aviation and are members of the EAA's Chapter 602.

The 'Stolp Starlet,' owned by Fultonville's Ellsworth Simpson, is now on display at the Amsterdam Mall

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) and its local Chapter 602 of Johnstown

The EAA, or the Experimental Aircraft Association, was formed in 1953 in the garage of the current president and founder of the EAA, Paul H. Poberezny.

It all started when Poberezny was building an airplane in his Milwaukee, Wisconsin garage. Friends from earlier years who had built planes would stop over to give advice and even-

tually, they banded together to form an organization for people who were interested in aviation and aircraft.

The EAA held their first convention that year in Milwaukee's Timmerman Field in which 40 airplanes attended.

What really got the EAA rolling was an article which appeared in the 1955 issue of

Mechanix Illustrated. The article pertained to homebuilt airplanes and as a result, inquiries from airplane enthusiasts around the world came pouring in on how to join the EAA.

In a few years, the EAA's membership of eight people sprouted into the thousands. Because of the growth in membership, the early fly-in

sites at Timmerman and other areas couldn't accommodate the thousands of aircraft that joined in the celebration of flight.

Therefore, in 1970, Oshkosh, Wisconsin was designated as the permanent site for the world's largest aviation event. Over 100,000 aircraft of all types descend upon the airfield the first week in August to view the displays, attend the lec-

tures, forums, workshops, demonstrations and to witness the world's finest air shows which are performed daily. It's the ultimate experience in sport aviation.

Through the years, over 125,000 memberships have been awarded to people in 91 different countries. Over 650 local

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Billman's revolutionary bi-plane: 'The Quickie'

Owen Billman, a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Adirondack Chapter 602 of Gloversville, is in the midst of completing a tandem wing bi-plane which he has been working on for a couple of years.

Unique as the project may seem to some, Owen Billman has been involved in the idea of aviation and flying since he was nine years old. This just happens to be Owen's seventh airplane.

But what makes this project extra special to Owen is that it's not just any kind of plane. The plane Mr. Billman is nearing completion on is called "The Quickie."

The Quickie was designed by an independent California inventor named Burt Rutan. Rutan runs a very small (three people employed) aircraft factory in the Mojave Airport where he designs homebuilt planes which people can send away for in a kit.

The extraordinary innovation received high praise from a NASA stability expert and it has been proven to be aerodynamically sound.

The reason this particular one-seater is so unusual is because the main wing, or canard, is up front under the engine, while another wing is

positioned right behind the pilot's head.

"This plane is probably the world's most efficient airplane because of its design," commented Owen.

And his statement is truly understandable after hearing the plane's statistics:

1. Empty, it weighs 240 lbs., including the engine.
2. Flies on an 18 horsepower, two cylinder engine.
3. Cruises at 120 mph and can top 130 mph.
4. Gets 100 miles-per-gallon of gas.

Thus, the design prevents download on the tail and the presence of the canard gives the plane uplift.

As we said previously, Owen's interest in airplanes and aviation took root when he was a young boy, but when he found himself in the Air Force flying P-38 fighters during World War II, the interest really stuck.

"After the war, I maintained my interest in flying. Since then, I've had about six planes — lifetime," added Owen.

The first plane Owen Billman ever built was 25 years ago on Long Island. At the moment, that plane, made from steel tubing, is slowly rusting in a storage area located on Owen's grand homestead which overlooks the Great Sacandaga

Lake.

Owen says the plane will be donated to the Nassau County Museum on Long Island — a museum dedicated to aircraft that have made significant contributions to the island.

Mr. Billman's home is adorned with curios, but of particular appeal are paintings, sketches, mobiles, models and any other apparatus involving the subject of aviation.

He has come to acquire antique propellers through the years, including one from 1908 (the Wright brothers' plane was built in 1903). Besides aviation, Owen is an avid photographer and artist.

"The Quickie's fuselage," explains Owen, "is made of urethane foam covered with different layers of fiberglass and epoxy." According to Owen, different layers of fiberglass are applied to different sections. The front portion of the fuselage is covered with more layers than the back portion.

The wing and canard are composed of styrofoam and are covered full length by 12 layers of fiberglass.

The plane can be obtained in a kit and includes everything — the fiberglass, foam, engine, propeller — but it does not include the battery and paint.

Another interesting feature about this plane is that about 500 are now being built in the United States and 50 are now flying.

When the Quickie is completed, Owen intends to take his it to the Saratoga County Airport because the length of the runways will be sufficient for testing purposes. At Saratoga, the runways are 4,000 feet.

There, Owen will test the taxi, liftoff and short runs before he actually flies The Quickie for real.

The Quickie in the making

"The Quickie," a tandem wing bi-plane with revolutionary aviation features, is being built by Owen Billman of Mayfield. In the nose of the Quickie sits a 2 cylinder, 18 horsepower engine whose top speed is 130 mph. The one-seater will cruise at 120 mph and will get 100 miles on a gallon of gas!

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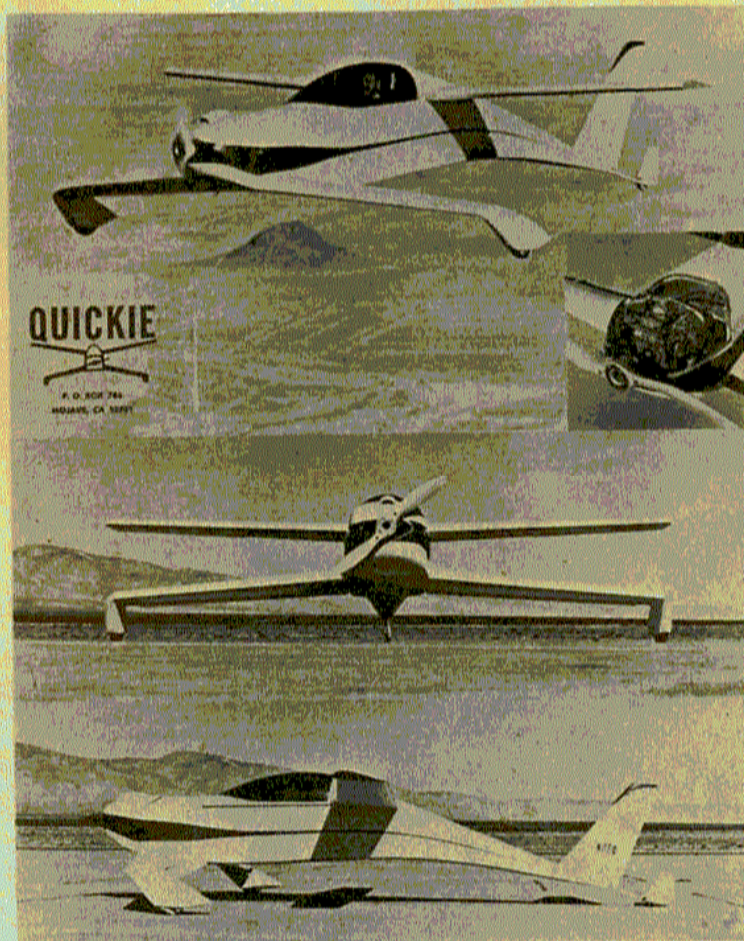


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The Recorder

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THE QUICKIE — This modern, streamlined-looking plane called "The Quickie," was designed by a Californian named Burt Rutan. About 500 are in the process of being built and 50 are flying in the country. At the moment, Mayfield's Owen Billman is building one at his home.

THE PILOT'S SEAT — H cockpit or pilot's seat "Quickie." The plane, af building, is nearing com ready to fly this summer be purchased in a kit, c need except paint and a b

Simpson's aviation endeavor

For Fultonville's Ellsworth Simpson, flying began when he was 15 years old — a time when he took lessons with his father up at Fort Plain's Nellis Field.

Ellsworth couldn't take the two-seater Luscombe on solo flights because he was too young, but he would find that the sport of flying and aircraft would keep with him in the years to come.

Eventually he went into the United States Air Force, but did not fly. Rather, he worked on electronics. After the service, he opened up his own business in Fultonville and started flying once again with a friend of his from Glen by the name of Lee Smith.

Together with Smith and other aircraft enthusiasts from the area, Chapter 602 of the Experimental Aircraft Association was formed approximately four years ago in Johnstown.

At this point, Simpson became a dedicated enthusiast of the sport and found that the history of aircraft and aviation specifically appealed to him.

He talks of Cole Palen's "Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Show," held annually in Rhinebeck, New York, with great enthusiasm.

"If you like old planes, this is the best place to go in the world," comments Simpson.

The show, according to Simpson, is perhaps the largest collection of antique and authentically reproduced aircraft owned by one man — Cole Palen.

Mr. Palen displays his fleet of World War I aircraft both in the air and on ground during weekends of the summer months. Not many people are aware of this magnificent show — only avid enthusiasts of airplanes and New York City people due to the publicity received in the city newspapers.

Simpson makes the show two to three times during the summer.

A couple of years ago, Ellsworth had the fortune of buying the same plane he and his father first learned to fly in — the two-seater Luscombe. Thus, the Luscombe became his first personally owned plane.

At the moment, the Luscombe is kept at the Amsterdam Airfield where he takes it out every once in a while in an effort to complete the hours necessary for his flying certification. Presently, Simpson has a student rating

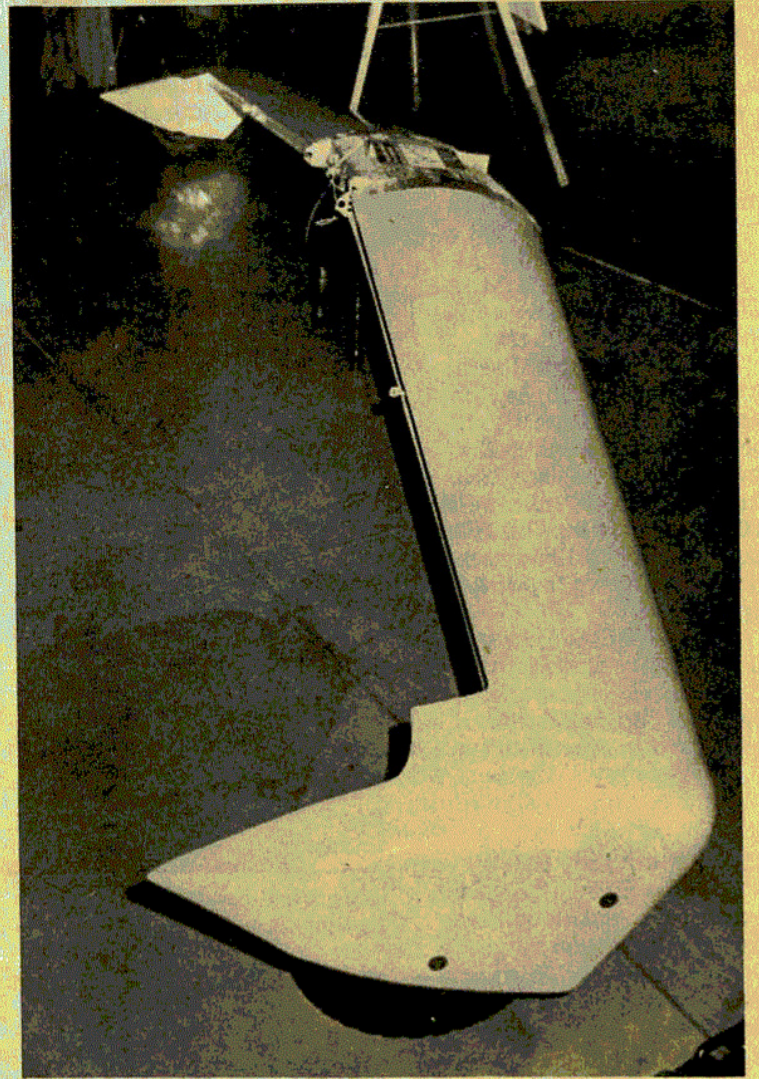
which means he can fly alone, but cannot bring passengers with him.

Besides working on his certificate, Simpson is working on another one of his possessions, a "Stolp Starlet."

The Starlet is a 10-year old design which was partially

completed upon purchase from a Northville man a couple of years ago. The plane is a single-seated, open cockpit style, composed of tube and fabric. Finished, it will weigh approximately 600 lbs.

This plane is now on display at the Amsterdam Mall.



'The canard,' built by Owen Billman of Mayfield, houses the wheels



HIS FIRST PLANE — The first plane Owen Billman ever owned was called a "shoulder wing mono-plane." In the photo above, Owen holds a painting of the plane which he did himself. The plane is named "Little Pink Cloud."

... local Chapter 602

(continued from page 1)

chapters compose the bulk of the EAA organization in which meetings and fly-ins are conducted.

The EAA, in its 27th year, involves people who build their own airplanes, builders of powered hang gliders, racing and rotary-wing enthusiasts and anyone having general aviation interests.

Three specific divisions of the EAA have been formed for people

who are involved in a specific style of flying: Antique-Classic Division; the International Aerobatic Club and the Warbirds of America.

Locally, the Adirondack Chapter No. 602 Inc., Experimental Aircraft Association, has Gary Lampman of Gloversville as its president.

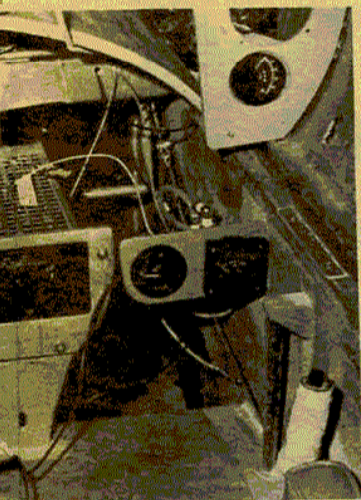
The Chapter's meeting room is maintained at the Amsterdam Airfield in Fort Johnson, located approximately 1½ miles west of the city, off of Route 5.

Approximately 60 are listed on the membership roster of the Chapter 602, with members coming from Schenectady, Canajoharie, Fort Plain, Glen, Fultonville, Amsterdam, Piseco Lake, Cobleskill and Averill Park.

The Chapter was formed about 15 years ago by Owen Billman and a few other area enthusiasts, but the club drew so many people from the Capital District area that the chapter was moved to Castleton, near Albany.

Thus, a local chapter disappeared for a few years until Billman, Ellsworth Simpson, Gary Lampman and some other interested advocates started up the chapter once again.

This time, the locale was the Fulco Airport in Johnstown, but eventually, the chapter was moved to the Amsterdam Airfield.



Here's a close look at the interior of Owen Billman's plane. After a couple of years of completion and should be perfect. The plane, which can contain everything you need for a battery.

Ultralight demo set April 25

On Saturday, April 25, a representative of Ultralight planes will be present at the Amsterdam Airfield to give a demonstration on the planes.

The Chapter 602 of the EAA will hold a chapter meeting at 9 a.m. and the demonstration will begin at approximately 10 a.m.

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Heath: an Amsterdam pioneer

Amsterdamian Edward Bayard Heath (1888-1931) dedicated a large portion of his life to the study of aviation, thus giving the city the good fortune to have an aviation pioneer right in its own midst.

In fact, his first flight was from the Antler's Country Club. Due to this accomplishment, the Adirondack Chapter 602 of the EAA dedicated a plaque commemorating the first flight of an aeroplane he designed.

Last fall at the Amsterdam Airfield in Fort Johnson, the 602 Chapter had ceremonies and a dedication honoring the anniversary of Heath's flight. A plaque was made up in which the inscription reads:

"Edward Bayard Heath, 1888-1931, native of Amsterdam, designer of racing and sport planes of the Golden Era, flew his first aeroplane from The Antlers Club, 0.7 miles west of this location on Sept. 13, 1910. Marker placed by Experimental Aircraft Assn., Chapter 602, Sept. 13.

The plaque will be located at the Amsterdam Airfield.

Aviation enthusiast Owen Billman of Mayfield wrote a synopsis on Heath's ac-

complishments which was printed in last fall's Recorder.

The story of Heath's accomplishments in aviation are as follows, as reprinted from Billman's accounts.

EDWARD BAYARD HEATH (1888-1931)

By the time the Wright Brothers made their first successful, powered flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1903, Ed Heath, 15 years old at the time, had avidly read every scrap of aeronautically-oriented material in the Amsterdam Library and had built and flown with varying degrees of success models of the Lilienthal and Chanute gliders of the era.

His inquisitive mind, forceful nature and mechanical aptitude, combined to permit him seven years later to produce his first aeroplane and to successfully test-fly it on Sept. 13, 1910.

That same year, Heath flew briefly at the Fonda Fair but came to grief when a boundary fence appears to have dispute his right of way.

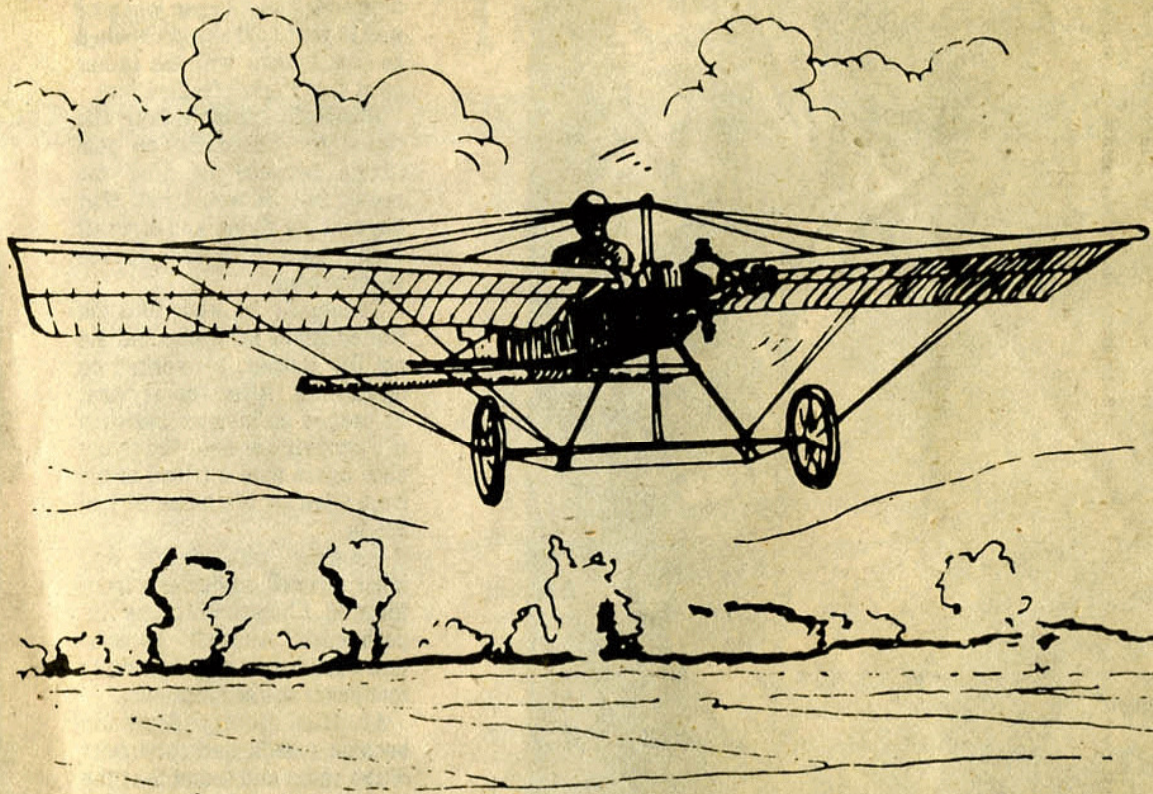
Shortly after these flights, his family moved to Chicago where he lived out his life.

During 1913, he established the "E.B. Heath Aerial Vehicle Company," a combined retail store and mail order house catering to a small group of aspiring aeronauts.

His aircraft were apparently offered in either kit or completed form.

During 1918-1919, Heath designed and built the "Feather" biplane and powered it with a seven-horse Thor motorcycle engine.

After World War I, Heath Modernized his style to "Heath



Airplane Company" and became a (as it is termed today) fixed base operator, offering flying instruction and charter service.

Aware that the supply of war surplus engines would soon be exhausted, he designed a four-passenger biplane called "The Favorite." It created a sensation in 1923 when it flew, fully loaded, from Chicago to St. Louis, where it won all the races in its class for efficiency and speed at the National Air Races.

Despite his triumph, Heath opted for the use of lower horsepower and by 1925, he and Claire Linsted designed and constructed the cantilever-wing Tomboy which won the light

plane races in Philadelphia in 1926 at 103 mph, on a 32 hp engine.

Within the month of November, 1925, Heath and Claire Linsted, designed and built the first Parasol monoplane which was to make him famous around the world. The fuselage was built of steel tubing braced diagonally with piano wire and it used lower wing panels from war-surplus Thomas-Morse Scout planes.

Power was supplied from a converted Henderson motorcycle engine. After designing a new set of wings, he began selling the Parasol in both kit and finished form. Soon his factory was hard-pressed to keep up with demand.

In 1929, he introduced the Super Parasol sold for \$975.00 ready to fly, or in kit form for \$199.00 without engine.

Another version of the plane produced in 1931 was the Heath Low Wing. It was a sporty-looking plane with the wing mounted at the bottom longeron and the strut, which braced the wing, under compression.

Heath was said to have some misgivings about having the struts under compression, but all calculations indicated it should be safe.

In February, 1931, he took it up for another test flight and while doing a wingover, the right wing collapsed against the fuselage. He fell 1,500 feet to his death.

Credits

Today's Freetime on Sport Aviation was written by Diane Tuman. Many thanks go to Owen Billman and Ellsworth Simpson who contributed information on aviation, making this article possible.

All the photos were taken by Diane except the photo of "The Quickie."

Next week, Freetime deals with model railroading.



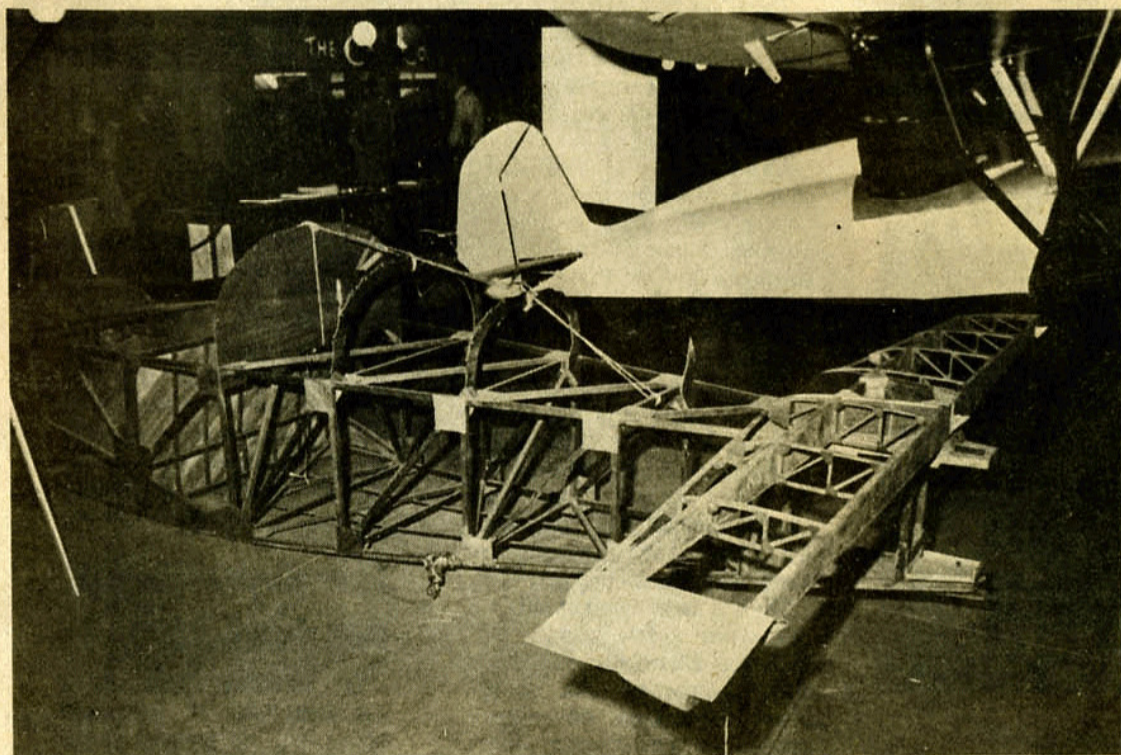
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MINI-CAB GY-20 — This skeleton, upon completion, will soon be a Mini-Cab GY-20 made by Grant VanLean of Fort Plain. At the present time, it sits in the Amsterdam Mall on display as part of

the Aviation Show. Built in 1980, it has a wingspan of 25 feet, empty weight of 595 lbs, gross weight of 1,069 lbs. and cruises at 47 mph.