



# The Hagerstown Homebuilder

[chapters.eaa.org/EAA36](http://chapters.eaa.org/EAA36) Hagerstown, MD

Vol. 31 No. 12

December

2022

**Happy Holidays from EAA Chapter 36!**



**Photo by Gary Keller**

# EAA CHAPTER 36

**December 2022**

## CONTENTS

*Cover Page  
Chapter Officers  
President's Corner  
EAA Article  
Chapter News  
Aviation News  
Upcoming EAA Webinars  
25 Years Ago Today  
Members' Pages*

**Published by  
EAA Chapter 36  
Hagerstown, MD  
[chapters.eaa.org/EEA36](http://chapters.eaa.org/EEA36)**

The contents of The Hagerstown Homebuilder are solely the viewpoints of the authors. No claim is made and no liability is assumed, expressed or implied as to the technical accuracy or safety of the material, opinions and/or views presented. The viewpoints expressed are not necessarily those of EAA Chapter 36 or the Experimental Aircraft Association.

<b>2021-22 OFFICERS AND SUPPORT STAFF</b>	
<b>President:</b> <b>Ray Franze</b> <a href="mailto:raymond.franze@gmail.com">raymond.franze@gmail.com</a>	<b>Vice-President:</b> <b>Gary Keller</b> <a href="mailto:garylkeller261@gmail.com">garylkeller261@gmail.com</a>
<b>Secretary:</b> <b>Dean Popio</b> <a href="mailto:dmpopio@gmail.com">dmpopio@gmail.com</a>	<b>Treasurer:</b> <b>Dean Popio</b> <a href="mailto:dmpopio@gmail.com">dmpopio@gmail.com</a>
<b>Young Eagles Coordinator:</b> <b>Curtis Berry</b> <a href="mailto:cberry@myactv.net">cberry@myactv.net</a>	<b>Tech Counselor - Flight Advisor:</b> <b>Gary Hartle</b> <a href="mailto:g.hartle@comcast.net">g.hartle@comcast.net</a>
<b>Webmaster:</b> <b>Carl Thornwall</b> <a href="mailto:thorn@myactv.net">thorn@myactv.net</a>	<b>Newsletter Editors:</b> <b>The Thornwall Family</b> <a href="mailto:thorn@myactv.net">thorn@myactv.net</a>
<b>Board of Directors:</b>	<b>Joe Boyle</b> <a href="mailto:joeboyle1@myactv.net">joeboyle1@myactv.net</a>
<b>Jim Marsden</b> <a href="mailto:jim.mindy@myactv.net">jim.mindy@myactv.net</a>	<b>Austin Colby</b> <a href="mailto:austin@colbytech.com">austin@colbytech.com</a>
<b>Elizabeth Thornwall</b>	<b>Dave Anderson</b>

→→→ **Our next general membership meeting will be held December 6th** →→→

## The President's Corner



Welcome to the home stretch of 2022. Our chapter had a lot of positive experiences over the previous year. Our third Ray Aviation Scholar, Andrew Russell, became a private pilot. We flew over 350 Young Eagles during our public events—including our 7,000<sup>th</sup> Young Eagle. We raised a significant amount of revenue through concessions during our chapter breakfasts and Wings & Wheels. We continued chapter flyouts to airport restaurants throughout the region—and we embarked on a group flyout up the Hudson River enjoying the New York City skyline. And we enjoyed some more educationally stimulating feature presentations

While the year draws to a close, Chapter progress continues.

EAA officially reviewed and approved Madison Richardson's nomination as our 2022 Ray Aviation Scholarship. Madison completed two flight lessons already. She is training on the field here at Hagerstown with Joe Baginski in a Cessna 172. The chapter application window is open to apply to receive a 2023 Ray Aviation Scholarship which I will be submitting to EAA in the near future.

Our scholarship committee met to discuss the applications for the Walter Green Memorial Scholarship. Of the four candidates, the committee was really excited about two of the applications. The committee voted to split the scholarship funds between the two candidates (\$2,500 each); and to also award each of those two an additional \$1,000 from the Richard Shoup Memorial Scholarship fund. The presentations will take place during January's monthly chapter gathering which will be held at PIA.

I am excited to report that we were approved for a \$6,500 community grant. These funds, which will cover the Chapter's operating expenses, help mitigate the financial impact of not having any fundraising events in 2020. This grant helps us achieve financial security for the Chapter's future, and provides us with an opportunity to explore additional ways we may be able to serve members and the community.

The Stolp SA-900 V-Star is making progress. Last week, we nearly got the third wing assembled. At this point, I'm not sure 2022 is going to be its year. But we're close ... really close! And I'm not going to rag on the guys working on it, because their patience and dedication to completing the project is incredible. Despite taking four-to-eight measurements before cutting once, modifications are still needed. And they keep after it.

The guys also continue to chip away on the Heath Parasol. Last week I saw the rudder was assembled and the control cables operated the control surface. So far the cold has yet to slow progress, but we all know the true cold and snow are just around the corner.

I have a good feeling that 2023 is going to be a very good year for moving through aircraft projects.

Based on last month's—for lack of a better term—election, the EAA Chapter 36 leadership team will be the same for the next two years. Be on the lookout for an email from me with the link for our internal chapter survey. I'm going to tweak the survey with an emphasis on value-added activities and looking for additional help to support the things we do.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our annual Christmas party at Curtis' and Kate's residence on Saturday, December 17. Great camaraderie, great food, great fun! If you would like to participate in the gift exchange, be sure to bring a gift for each participant. The value of gifts brought in the past ranged from restaurant gift cards worth ~\$25 down to whatever someone probably didn't sell at their last yard sale. And the gifts range from practical to absurd. All of which makes the gift exchange a lot of fun. We hope to see you there. But ... RSVP (to Curtis and Kate)!

Lastly, a huge Thank You! to all of the chapter's volunteers who have devoted countless hours of blood, sweat, and/or tears to making our chapter a success. The fun that we have together, and our impact on the community, would not be possible without the efforts that so many afford our organization. And for that, I offer my most heartfelt, "Thank You!" Whether you have contributed just once, or time and again, we love you! And to anyone who hasn't yet volunteered in some capacity—a simple, "How can I help?" will be greatly appreciated. Until next time ....

Safe skies!

## **EAA, Sporty's Welcome More Than 100,000 Young People to Online Learn to Fly Course**

See full article at: <https://www.eaa.org/eaanews-and-publications/eaanews-and-aviation-news/news/eaanews-and-sportys-welcomes-100000-to-virtual-learn-to-fly-course>

More than 100,000 young people nationwide have now had the opportunity to discover and explore a next step in aviation, thanks to the Sporty's Pilot Shop Learn to Fly Course available free of charge following their EAA Young Eagles flights.

The online Sporty's course is available free to all of the nearly 2.3 million EAA Young Eagles as a follow-up to their initial introductory flight by volunteer EAA-member pilots. The course is a comprehensive online ground school, test prep, and flight training companion that provides all the knowledge and concepts to pass the FAA private pilot written test, oral exam, and checkride. As Young Eagles progress through the course, they earn a voucher for a free flight lesson, and reimbursement for the cost of their FAA knowledge exam.

"Having more than 100,000 young people engage in aviation through the Sporty's Learn to Fly Course is a milestone that will lead to results that we will be able to see for years to come," said David Leiting, EAA's Eagles Program manager. "Sporty's Pilot Shop makes this course available at no charge to our Young Eagles so they can continue to discover the world of flight, regardless of their location, in an easy-to-comprehend way that sets them up for even more success. We thank Sporty's on behalf of tens of thousands of young aviation enthusiasts."

The concept to provide Sporty's online courses at no charge for Young Eagles was developed with input from EAA pilots who had been flying Young Eagles. Those pilots reported that after their flight, many of the young people wanted to discover more about aviation but lacked access to reliable and professional resources. The goal is to build the next generation of aviators and boost student pilot starts with a group already engaged through the Young Eagles program.

# Chapter 36

## News and Events

Although Frederick airport's self-serve fuel pump is still out of service, the airport will stop offering self-serve prices for the fuel truck after December 1st.

<b>Current Fuel Prices</b>		
as of November 29, 2022		
<b>Airport</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>FS</b>
Hagerstown	\$6.75	\$7.50
Frederick	\$6.85*	\$7.60
Martinsburg	\$6.39	\$6.89
Winchester	<b>\$5.98</b>	<b>\$6.49</b>
Cumberland		\$6.55
Carroll County	\$6.85	\$7.55
*Currently Unavailable		
<a href="http://www.airnav.com">www.airnav.com</a>		



Weekly Build Nights at the Chapter 36 Hangar,  
Monday nights at 7 p.m.

### December



**Chapter Meeting**

Monthly chapter meeting on Tuesday, December 6th, 7:00 p.m. at the Hagerstown Aviation Museum hangar.



**Christmas Party**

The chapter's annual Christmas party will take place at Curtis and Kate's house on Saturday, December 17th. Time and additional details to be announced.

## Aviation News:

### 'It looks like they made it for now'

Mooney pilot, passenger rescued from aircraft hanging in power lines

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/28/it-looks-like-they-made-it>

### Training and Safety Tip: The Missing Checklist Item

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/21/training-and-safety-tip-the-missing-checklist-item>

### Liftoff: NASA's Artemis I Launches Into Space, History

<https://www.flyingmag.com/liftoff-nasas-artemis-i-launches-into-space-history/>

### How Not to Fall Off Your Airplane

<https://www.flyingmag.com/how-not-to-fall-off-your-airplane/>

### Early Analysis: Wings Over Dallas Midair Collision

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rurnZ1jc74f4>

### BasicMed Limitation Lifted

Final rule extends eligibility to act as required crewmember

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/17/basicmed-limitation-lifted>

### Fatal Homebuilt Aircraft Accidents Remain Under Historic Average

<https://www.eaa.org/eaanews-and-publications/eaanews-and-aviation-news/news/homebuilt-aircraft-accidents-under-average>

### FAA Extending Aircraft Registration Period

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/22/faa-extending-aircraft-registration-period>

### X-37B Spaceplane lands after 908 days in space

<https://theaviationgeekclub.com/x-37b-spaceplane-lands-after-908-days-in-space/>

### Pilot Job Market Has Never Seen Numbers Like This

October best month in aviation hiring, ever

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/15/pilot-hiring-has-never-seen-numbers-like-this>

### Inside the 'Spruce Goose'

<https://www.flyingmag.com/inside-the-spruce-goose/>

### 'Cyber Incident' Affected Flight Planning

Boeing subsidiary Jeppesen apparently targeted

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/09/cyber-incident-affected-flight-planning>

### Whiteman Airport Gears up for Milestone Young Eagles Flight

<https://www.flyingmag.com/whiteman-airport-gears-up-for-milestone-young-eagles-flight/>

### From the Starfighter to the Enterprise NCC-1701-D

<https://www.flyingmag.com/from-the-starfighter-to-the-enterprise-ncc-1701-d/>

### Piper's History Found on the Bank of the Susquehanna

<https://www.flyingmag.com/delving-into-pipers-history-with-a-visit-to-lock-haven-pennsylvania/>

### Antonov Rebuilding World's Largest Cargo Aircraft, 'Mriya'

<https://www.flyingmag.com/antonov-rebuilding-worlds-largest-cargo-aircraft-mriya/>

### Check Ride Ends in Flat Tire

<https://generalaviationnews.com/2022/10/27/check-ride-ends-in-flat-tire/>

### Gyro Hero: Completion Katas

Wrapping up gyroplane training

<https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2022/november/21/gyro-hero-completion-katas>

## Upcoming EAA Webinars

Full list: <https://www.eaa.org/ea/news-and-publications/ea-webinars>

Date	Time	Title	Presenter(s)
12/6/22	7 p.m. CST	<a href="#">Rotax 912 Engines for Sonex Aircraft Homebuilders Webinar Series</a>   <b>Qualifies for FAA WINGS and AMT credit</b>	Mark Schaible <i>Mark Schaible of Sonex Aircraft will talk about Rotax 912 series engine installations in the Sonex aircraft worldwide fleet including customer-designed installations through the years, various mounting types, and the Sonex factory's own installation of the 912iS in the 2022 One Week Wonder. Mark will also give installation, cost, and performance comparisons of Rotax 912 engines in Sonex aircraft vs. other Sonex-approved engine installations.</i>
12/7/22	7 p.m. CST	<a href="#">When Data Doesn't Look Right</a>   <b>Qualifies for FAA WINGS and AMT credit.</b>	Mike Busch <i>Nowadays, more than half of the piston GA fleet is equipped with some sort of recording digital engine monitor. A modern engine monitor with a few dozen sensors records more than 100,000 measurements per hour of flight. This data can have immense diagnostic value. In this webinar, Mike Busch A&amp;P/IA discusses Project GADfly, his company's exciting research project using Artificial Intelligence and Deep Learning to detect anomalous engine monitor data in order to alert aircraft owners that something doesn't look right.</i>
12/13/22	7 p.m. CST	<a href="#">The History of the P-64: EAA's Forgotten Fighter</a>   <b>Museum Webinar Series</b>	Chris Henry and Ben Page <i>Though this export fighter never saw combat, it graced the skies of Oshkosh for decades. Join us as we talk about Paul Poberezny's first warbird, and one of his favorite aircraft to fly. Museum staff members Chris Henry and Ben Page take a look at the P-64.</i>
12/14/22	7 p.m. CST	<a href="#">Flying Clubs 101</a>	Timm Bogenhagen <i>EAA's initiative to support the formation of flying clubs by the members of EAA's chapter network continues to grow, and Timm Bogenhagen from the EAA will help you learn the ins and outs of forming a separate nonprofit flying club at your local airport!</i>
12/20/22	7 p.m. CST	<a href="#">Living With Your Aircraft: A Guide to Finding or Building the Ideal Airpark</a>	Erik McCormick <i>Have you ever dreamed of living with your aircraft, or do you live in an airpark community or own property with a runway? Join Erik McCormick, founder of Aviation Real Estate Specialists, to discuss best methods for finding, purchasing, and starting an airpark from scratch. For those living in an airpark already, Erik will discuss some best practices for a safe and enjoyable experience for all residents. Interesting to note, airparks with an active EAA chapter have historically brought in higher value and desirability.</i>

## 25 Years Ago Today – December 2, 1997

The regular monthly meeting of EAA Chapter 36, Hagerstown, MD, was held in the meeting room at Alphin Aircraft. The meeting was called to order by President Jack Raun, with 25 members and guests present. The November minutes, and the Treasurer's report were read and approved.

Mini-Max – Don Wilson reported it is coming along fine. The fuselage is half done. A Rotax engine was given to us to do with what we want. It is too heavy for the Mini-Max, but we will take anything we can get.

Don Wilson was asked to look after the Hangar. Walter was out and vacuumed on Monday. If anyone else wants to help on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, Walter will be in the Hangar. We have a good facility. Also, we need some younger blood in the membership, but how to get them interested, is the major question.

Charlie bought an airplane, we worked on it, and then started the flying club with that airplane. Maybe we need another project of that type. Some members feel the airport is not friendly to small and lighter aircraft. We need to do something.

No one wants to take the stewardship of the chapter. There is a possibility of appointing an operating committee. Twelve people to run and plan the programs.

New Business: Kevin Green, Green Landings, is building an Ultralight area. His dream is being fulfilled, and regaining the fun of flying. The fastest area of flying is the ultralight, and he has 18 signed up for lessons. We can now afford to keep renting our hangar. We need new and fresh ideas to keep going. We need to know where we are and where we need to go.

March is our Awards Banquet. The ballot for the awards will be in next month's newsletter, along with a list of past winners.

The Nominating Committee had no success in getting a President, but recently received a volunteer for Vice-President – Bob Scott.

For the time being it was suggested to have an interim operating board, and Dean Bercaw offered to be the Chairman. A motion to that effect was approved.

Joe Boyle asked about having an Aviation Merit Badge for Scouting in March. Don Myers will be the Chairman and Joe Boyle the Vice-Chairman for these programs.

The Secretary to write a letter of thanks to Tracey for allowing us to meet in the meeting Room. Tracey to be asked to be a Technical Counselor for the Chapter.

Submitted by June Green.

### **A note from Jay Kanagy:**

All monthly minutes and/or chapter information from 1997 until early 2020 has been archived, along with all newsletters from August 2006 up to the present. Any member wishing to view any past history item can contact Greg, our newsletter editor, or myself, and we would be happy to oblige. Hard copy newsletters, and minutes are being stored in the file cabinet at our hangar. Special recognition must go to Sandy and Mark Hissey for past minutes and information, also to Betty Wright for minutes, and Jack Raun for past newsletters. All members cooperation in this matter, has been, and is greatly appreciated. Thank You!



# Members' Pages

## Tony Vallillo

I offer you a series of articles that I wrote for the website [www.flightsim.com](http://www.flightsim.com) some years back about the Thorp T-211 and my flight in it from Oregon to Connecticut after I bought it back in 1996. This is a low and slow saga, close to the experiences of many of our members, and might perhaps be of interest to some. – Tony

Those of you who have joined me in my previously penned reminiscences here may no doubt be thinking that I am off on another sentimental journey through the annals of American Airlines, the silver fleet that I had the privilege of piloting during a long and delightful career. But such is not the case. This Argosy is of a different color altogether; for this is the tale of a love affair with a single, and much different, airplane!

Flight simulation can serve a multitude of purposes - it can train, it can entertain, it can inspire and it can prepare, to name but a few. Simulation can even save one a not inconsiderable pile of money, regardless of how much money one may sink into it. It can save all of this money because it can serve as a sublimation of the otherwise irresistible urge to go out and buy a real airplane!

Airplane ownership is the Holy Grail of personal aviation. Although few start out taking flying lessons in an airplane they already own, by the time the ink is dry on most pilots' certificates the subtle urges are already beginning to show - most often manifested by an irresistible urge to peruse the bulletin boards at small airports (many of these are festooned with advertisements for small airplanes of every sort). Soon thereafter a strange newspaper-like publication, printed on yellow newsprint of all things, may make an appearance in the weekly mail. This is Trade-A-Plane, the bible of small plane advertisement. Long hours may be spent perusing and perhaps even salivating over the various offerings, which range from Piper Cubs to Lear jets.



Trade-A-Plane, the source of just about all aircraft classified in the USA

Ownership becomes a primordial urge because of the often uncertain availability of airplanes with which to satisfy the desire to fly once the pilot license is obtained. There is no glut of airplanes for rent, such as exists in the case of automobiles. On a nice flying day every rental airplane on the line is up in the air all day, either boring holes in the sky in search of the perfect hamburger for the licensed, or busy in the process of preparing students to join the hamburger hunt! Unless one has reserved an airplane far enough in advance that the weather becomes a gamble, one often spends those beautiful days at the airport watching those who made earlier reservations having all of the fun.

Flying clubs, although certainly a great way to spread the acute financial pain of airplane ownership over a greater number of people, are subject to the same limitations, unless the club in question has one or two oddball airplanes that few members check out in. In any event, oddball airplanes usually end up in that category for a reason; many pilots cannot check out in them for lack of experience or some other issue.

Each beautiful day spent on the ground offers a fertile breeding ground for the virus of airplane ownership. The pilots who own airplanes fly whenever they want without regard for the availability of a rental. They gorge themselves on hundred dollar hamburgers, visit distant beaches in an hour or so and gaze down on the lesser hordes stuck in long traffic jams to get to those same playgrounds. The frustrated renter pilot sees all of this and fantasizes about having his own plane, something fast and beautiful that is always awaiting his beck and call.

Alas; like fast and beautiful women, airplanes are high maintenance items! Most pilots soon come to grips with an inevitable fact of life - if you have to ask how much it costs you can't afford it. The hundred dollar hamburger is not some exclusive gourmet delight made from specially imported Argentinean Biffa de lomo, but rather a journeyman slab of supermarket chuck spiced up with the cost of aviation gasoline and hangar rental, to say nothing of annual inspections and insurance. What to do, what to do?



Quality Wings 757, one of hundreds of airplanes that you can "check out" on in the Flight Simulator world

Starting in the 1990's, when Flight Simulator migrated to the Wintel world and Microsoft took over the franchise, the ever growing realism that it offered became a sublimation, for some, of the unaffordable urge to own an airplane. Here was a reasonable simulacrum of flying, one which was always ready and waiting in its virtual hangar, in a world in which one even had control of the weather! Not only that, but this world offered one the chance to "check out" in airplanes in which one could only ride as a passenger in that other world, the one we call real. To top it all off, the price was right - even at the level of those who buy airliner nose sections for home cockpits, simulation is still orders of magnitude less expensive than airplane ownership.

I had, earlier in my adulthood, sampled the pleasures of airplane ownership in more financially halcyon times, when avgas cost less than \$1 per gallon and an early Beech Bonanza could be had for \$9000. Even so, my airplane partner and I had to skimp - unable to afford a hangar, we had to tie the airplane down in the South Carolina heat. Heat is the implacable foe of solid state avionics, and the Bonanza was equipped with a very early incarnation of transistorized radios. These often rolled over and died in the summer heat, forcing us to call the tower and get light gun signals to facilitate a departure. Usually, after sufficient cooling in the more temperate climes aloft, the radios would come to life, allowing us to reenter the control zone and return home. On at least one occasion, however, the radios stayed dead and we had to recover at an uncontrolled outlying airport.



N691B, the Beech Bonanza that I owned in the mid 1970's along with another Air Force pilot; an outstanding airplane in every way

Satisfying as all of this was, nothing lasts forever. My newfound airline employment took me away from South Carolina, and the Beechcraft, N691B, was sold. It remains on the FAA registry to this day, out in the area of Phoenix Arizona, quite possibly under the ownership of the same person my partner sold the airplane to back in 1977. My own flying was subsequently done mostly in airliners and military cargo jets, although I always got myself checked out at whatever FBO existed in the vicinity. I joined and flew with a few clubs along the way, but the frustration of airplane availability still bit hard and painfully. Ownership, however, was out of the question. By this time I had met and married She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. Women, as I said, are high maintenance items; and although She shops at Marshall's and TJ Maxx (and is thus a keeper!) the financial obligations of family life prior to the Captaincy were such as to keep me firmly ensconced in the world of virtual airplane ownership. There I stayed for more than a decade, enjoying each new and more realistic version of FS.

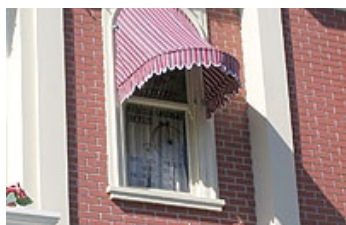


P-51 Mustang on the warbird line at Oshkosh. Several million dollars on the hoof these days!



BD-5 Jet, once thought to be the poor man's fighter, and every pilot's dream. It became controversial when Bede was unable to deliver a recip engine for the hundreds of kits he had sold. Very few ever flew, and only a handful had the jet engine, but those who flew the jet reported that it flew superbly. One now serves as a cruise missile simulation for training Air Force interceptor pilots on homeland defense missions.

I had started, around 1986, to attend the huge EAA airshow held each summer at Oshkosh. This fiesta has the same effect on pilots as Roman orgies no doubt had on Vestal Virgins - temptation with a capital T! Each year I attended I became enamored of a different unobtainable airplane; one year the P-51 Mustang, another year the Bede Micro Jet. For awhile it seemed like all I had to do own a fantastic airplane was either become a millionaire or build it myself. Since I remain to this day unsure of which end of a claw hammer to hit a nail with, it looked like I had to wait either for retirement or a lucky day at Powerball to actually own an airplane again. So on and on I went with FS, scratching the itch to fly without actually getting rid of it.



A window on the second floor of a building on Main Street USA at Disney World with Dave's name on it, a tribute to the work he did here.

Along the way I encountered a remarkable man in Connecticut, where I lived. Dave Gengenbach was a consummate engineer, and had a long and distinguished career at Walt Disney, where he was instrumental in the development of audio animatronics, particularly at Disney World. Several buildings in the Magic Kingdom bear humorous inscriptions in his honor. He was also a pilot from way back in the 1950's, and a veteran of Oshkosh since the Rockford days. He had lived in California in the sixties while working at Disney, and he had been an integral part of the homebuilt movement that had taken root out there in the fifties starting with the birth of EAA. Along the way, he had made the acquaintance of one John Thorp.

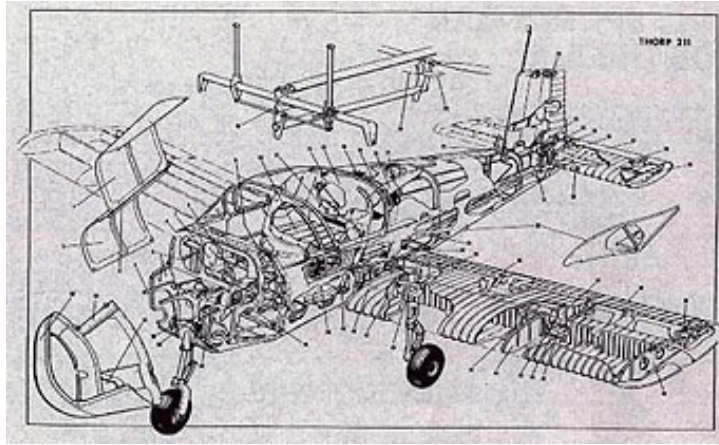
John Thorp may not be as well known today as Burt Rutan, but in the sixties he occupied a similar pedestal in the world of homebuilt aviation. His Thorp T-18 was a pioneering all-metal single engine design that achieved cult status by the seventies and is still occasionally built today. He and another aeronautical engineer named Fred Weik went to Piper in the early sixties and developed the Cherokee line. They took, as their starting point, one of Thorp's earlier designs, one that had its origins immediately after the end of WWII, the SkySkooter.



Thorp's original design, the Lockheed "Little Dipper", in front of a more familiar Lockheed product. The Dipper was intended to be every soldier's airplane, a craft that could be flown by an infantryman with virtually no training. It never served in that role, of course, but it would become the inspiration and basis for the first Sky Skooter in 1946.  
Wikipedia Photo

By the end of the Second World War, it seemed that the entire world would be flying airplanes back and forth to the grocery store every day. Tens of thousands of men (and a fair number of women as well) had become qualified as pilots, and it was assumed that many if not most of these would be clamoring to buy and fly an airplane of their own just as soon as they mustered out of the service. A number of outfits began planning to provide these pilots with the airplanes they were thought to want, one of which was the Thorp Aircraft Company. Thorp's entry in the airplane lottery was a very small single engine low wing design that had its origins in an effort during the war to produce an airplane that an infantryman could fly almost without any training. This design was fitted with an 85hp engine and dubbed the T-11 SkySkooter. Three pre-production prototypes were built in 1946, and the design was certificated by the old CAA in that year.

This was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that pundits overestimated the interest of the American public in private aviation. It turned out that most of the war-trained pilots had had air experiences that were not at all conducive to either pursuing a career as a pilot or buying and flying a personal plane. Many of them left their wings in the top drawer of the dresser and pursued careers with both feet firmly on the ground. And even for those who actually remained eager to slip the surly bonds, there were surplus airplanes by the thousands available for pennies on the dollar all over the country. A new design from a little known company was doomed from the start. The SkySkooter, although an excellent airplane, never made it off the ground commercially - only those three were built. And so things seemed to stay, for awhile at least.



A drawing of the T-211 showing the simplicity of construction. Photo from Pinterest

Fast forward to the mid sixties. By then the T-11 derived Cherokee was well on its way to becoming one of the world's most popular light airplanes, to say nothing of being the scion of an entire family of planes from the Cherokee 140 all the way eventually to the Seneca twin. And in those long gone days of 29.9 cent per gallon car gas there really were thousands of brand new light airplanes being sold every year. After setting up the Cherokee line for Piper, Thorp returned to California and set his sights once again on the little SkySkooter. Beefing it up with a 100hp engine, he re-certificated it in 1966 as the T-211 SkySkooter. And lo and behold, who worked with him on this project and did some of the test flying but Dave Gengenbach.

Again, three production prototypes were built; but alas, just those three. By now Cessna and Piper had pretty much divided and conquered the light airplane market, and the Skooter could get no more traction in 1966 than it had gotten in 1946. A total of six airplanes had been built, and Thorp himself owned and flew at least two of them, albeit not at the same time. A few more were built in the seventies with the intent of trying to sell them in Europe, but with no greater success. By the mid nineties a fellow out in California had bought the rights, parts and tooling (100 complete ship sets of parts had been produced in 1966 and stored ever since) and began selling the airplane as a kit for the home built market. Somewhere around a score of kits were sold and several were completed by their builders. These were essentially identical to the prototypes. But this venture also failed to really get off the ground.

The closest the little SkySkooter came to full scale production was in the mid 2000's, when a physician from Texas bought what was left of the 1966 parts and rights and set out to certify the airplane in the new light sport category. This resulted in the Indus T-211 Thorpedo, which was a modified version of the SkySkooter with a 125hp Jabiru engine and some plastic parts in place of the original formed metal nose cowl and wingtips. The Thorpedo also dispensed with perhaps the signature feature of the entire design. The original Skooters all had externally ribbed wings; that is, external corrugations in the wing and stabilizer skins replaced most of the internal wing ribs. There are only three internal ribs in each Skooter wing- one inboard where the landing gear strut is located, one about midway out the wing, and one at the end, where the wingtip piece is attached. This made for an exceptionally light and simple to build design (the empty weight of a T-211 is around 750 pounds). Some of the Thorpedos had smooth wings and internal ribs.

To be continued next newsletter!

You can also find it here: <https://www.flightsim.com/vbfs/content.php?15523-Silver-Argosy-Part-1>