

Galway Man Building Plane in His Cellar

By BETH KRUEGER

Recorder County Editor

GALWAY — In about 18 months Mike Russell of Division Street, Galway plans to dig a hole in the cellar wall of his ranch-style house.

By that time the pile of bolts, tubing and boards on his cellar floor will have grown into a full-size airplane ready for take-off.

Russell is one of five area members of the Experimental Aircraft Assn. (EAA) building airplanes in attics, garages

and backyards. The local EAA is part of a Wisconsin-based organization of homemade plane buffs. About 30 members from ages 17 to mid-60s get together every month at Fulton-Montgomery Community College to share enthusiasms and ideas.

Build While Learning

About 60 percent of the local members have pilot's licenses. Others are building planes while learning to fly, says Gary Lampman of Johnstown, president of the

local EAA. Lampman is a mechanic at Schenectady County Airport. When not discussing airplane design, other members are students, teachers, engineers or retired. The roster includes plane buffs from Perth, Broadalbin, Mayfield, Amsterdam, Galway, Glen, Johnstown, Gloversville, Hagaman, Ballston, and Albany.

The "I built it myself" pride has given the homemade planes an excellent safety record, says Russell, who is working on his third plane. An engineer in General Electric's steam turbine division, Russell built his first plane, a biplane, 10 years ago.

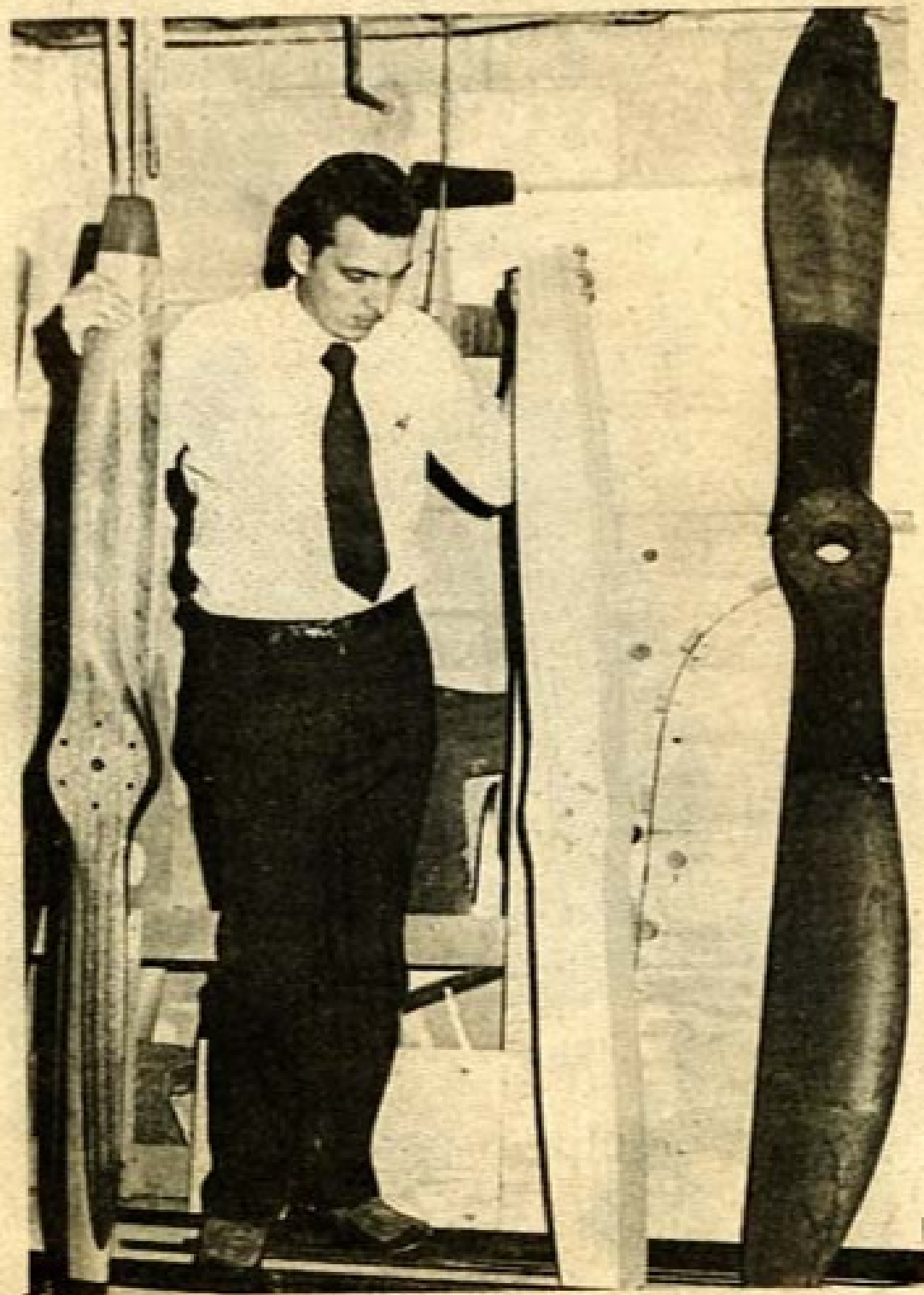
Family Encouragement

"Some people say I enjoy building more than flying," Russell says. After his second plane was completed. "it just seemed strange not to have a plane in the cellar," he says. With family encouragement, he sold the second plane and began the current project. Through the sale of the other planes, Russell says he has "found a legal, safe, hobby without spending a fortune."

The builder becomes a jack-of-all-trades. By working from kits or plans, EAA members develop precision in wood-working, welding, and fabric covering, says Lampman. Russell also constructs his own propellers. There are designs for everyone from the popular biplane to gliders, helicopters, amphibious, aerobatic, or contemporary planes. Others buy "basket cases" to reconstruct old planes from a bag of parts.

'Gadgetitis'

Owen Billman of Mayfield is building a motorized glider and several other members have plans for a fiberglass plane which can reach speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour, Lampman says.



AIRPLANE CRAFTSMAN — Mike Russell of Division St., Galway, compares a future airplane propeller with the finished products. Russell, a member of the local Experimental Airplane Association (EAA), is building his third plane in his cellar. The propeller on the left was handmade by Russell. EAA members are building everything from gliders to high-speed planes in backyards, attics and cellars. (Krueger)