

Introducing the “Newbie”

By Paul Gregory, EAA Chapter 1410

I am in many respects a “newbie.” I am new to this world of homebuilding and to aviation as a whole. Unlike some of our members, I have not assembled anything more complicated than a scale model aircraft, nor am I a high-time pilot.

Despite always being interested in aircraft since I was six, it wasn't until I was thirty-four that I did anything about it. At the time I had a false alarm regarding my heart and this scare made me change some of my priorities - so I decided to learn to fly. Every week I learned to fly despite juggling the responsibilities of launching my own software services company and the arrival of my second child. This was eight years ago.

Once I earned my wings in 2001, I enthusiastically took up friends and family for rides. But my friends at the time were not aviation junkies so the thrill of solo \$100 hamburger flights began to wane and I never got over being a newbie and an outsider to general aviation. Like many other newly licensed private pilots I began to leave the hobby.

For the intervening years I let my priorities shift back and let life take me over—I continued to build my company, Intervera Data Solutions (with two business partners), and watch my daughter Sarah and younger son Jonathon grow up. My passion for aviation never died and I never stopped reading about it as my wife Mary can testify to by pointing to all the boxes of magazines and flying books as evidence! Despite this, I stopped flying.

In 2004, I came across the International EAA website and I thought I'd join. At first I enjoyed the articles in *Sport Aviation* magazine and I began to think about the possibility of building my own aircraft. But the stories covered people far away from home and as a newbie I remained intimidated that I could never tackle such a project alone.

A year later, a newsletter arrived in the mail from a newly formed group based in High River. From reading this newsletter, I realized that there were others in Alberta who not only considered homebuilding but also had done it! With encouragement from many, I decided to drive down from Calgary and see what this group was all about. From the first moment I walked into the meeting room in the flight services building, I realized that I had found a group of like-minded people from many different walks of life who were passionate about the same thing. I joined EAA Chapter 1410 High River that night.

Since joining the chapter, I changed and made aviation a priority again. I signed up for pilot recurrency training, got all checked out and now I fly regularly either renting or flying with chapter friends. I flew down to Oshkosh in 2006 and along with twenty other chapter members volunteered in the “Lancaster at Oshkosh” tent. I took two EAA SportAir Workshops courses at High River - Sheet Metal Basics and Electrical Systems. Last year my family hosted the Ram River Fly-Out and later we drove down with our trailer to the Arlington Northwest Fly-in. I volunteered to play an active role in the chapter.

It is 2008 now and I haven't committed to a homebuilt yet, but I am fine with this since I will know when the time is right. So, I still consider myself a newbie. But now I am among friends who are either newbies themselves or remember being one and are enthusiastically willing to help.