

THE HOMEBUILDER'S

Corner

by PAUL H. POBERZNY



THE FEATURE on the EAA Design Contest appearing in the February, 1963 issue of Popular Mechanics offers food for thought. For those readers who were not familiar with the Design Contest, it was a competition for which awards totaling five thousand dollars were to be given for aircraft best meeting the design requirements. This award money was contributed by EAA members in the hope that this money would act as an incentive to encourage free thinkers into developing a "keep at home" airplane.

Though there were pros and cons on the merits of each aircraft which was either entered or placed, there was, however, one very noticeable aspect brought to light as a result of this EAA effort. This is evidenced by the great influx of mail, phone calls and personal visits by individuals who either have flown in the past, or are currently flying, or who have just become very intrigued with the idea of having a "keep at home" airplane.

It is very apparent, after listening to the opinions of these people or reading their letters, that aircraft development for the person of average means is in its infancy, and that present day aircraft development is either presented as an expensive mode of transportation or as a status symbol for the higher income brackets. It is also apparent that many of us who are connected with aviation have preconceived ideas as to the kind of airplane this person called "average" should have. And, that any aircraft built last year is outdated, and to build one just like it would be a step backward. If this is true, then these individuals will never be in a position to enjoy the wonders of flight, as aviation will always be just beyond their reach.

Many have said that Peter Bowers' all-wood "Fly Baby" was a big step backward, and its vintage is that of the early thirties. All-wood construction is a thing of the past! And folding wings? Why, that's not new! Many of us in aviation may agree with this thinking, and our own daily familiarity with the subject may have clouded our vision. Since the commercial development of the airplane has, for all practical purposes, possibly run its course, then probably the best way to go about it would be to start all over again. A return to simple design and construction methods may well be the path which will attract the most followers.

What matters is the materials used in building an airplane, as long as they are of proven quality and strength. Wood can be a delightful material to work with, and very few individuals have not had some experience working with wood in one type of project or another. Most were made familiar with this material back during their school days in the manual training classes, and whether or not they have since built a bookcase, a toybox or a garage, woodworking is something they can understand, and the plans will unfold more clearly for them. These same individuals are somewhat dubious about tackling a steel tubing structure, for no reason other than the fact that they just are not familiar with steel tubing and the methods of working it, and not least of all, have probably never in their life had any kind of flame torch in their hands.

To the individual writing to Headquarters or to the Design Contest entry as a result of the publicity over the "Keep at home" folding-wing airplane, here is a group of airplanes that has stirred his imagination, one of which "could be mine, one that I can keep at home, or with wings folded, at least store inside at an airport at a fee that is within the family budget." It is obvious that the person wanting to fly, wants to enjoy the pleasure of flight as a sport or hobby, much the same as he would boating or other interests. He is apparently willing to budget part of the family income

(Continued on page 35)

Experimental Aircraft Assn.
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
BUILDING FUND
and Air Education Museum
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\$13,848.60

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Your Contributions Are The Tools of Aviation Education

Homebuilder's Corner . . .

(Continued from page 2)

toward this purpose. However, there has been no product available to him with any amount of utility that would cause him to consider owning or flying his own aircraft. And, I am told that the boating industry did not flourish until the boat, automobile and trailer were combined. Certainly, all three of these items individually are not new ideas, and they are all still made from the same basic materials year in and year out.

Perhaps the individual has to educate himself to the differences between practical utility and limited sport usefulness. It's easy to sell the wife and family on a runabout for tearing around the lake on a summer day, but try to sell it as a means of transportation and you've had it. Yet, no one thinks anything about storing it for the whole winter just for the few days of pleasure it gives in the summer. But, the sport airplane has the pleasure of the one and the utility of the other, and if the right type is built, can be used year around. Once that is understood, the airplane will justifiably dispossess that boat from the precious space it takes up in the garage.

Maybe the "Fly Baby" and the other Design Contest airplanes do not have the lines of a swan, but one thing for sure, they have attracted a considerable amount of interest from a hitherto untapped market, and should Mr. William Piper, Sr. of Piper Aircraft Co. some day see his idea of a nationwide network of single strip airports carried out, then maybe the lightplane will amount to something after all.

LETTERS . . .

(Continued from page 3)

with the highest interest all of his back issues of SPORT AVIATION, attended two chapter meetings and have become hopelessly addicted to your movement.

I have been flying since 1944 and have always wanted to embark on a "Do It Yourself" program. The need for your organization is felt more now than ever before. The inspiration of youth, the promotion of aviation in an area of definite need, the preservation of aviation trades and techniques, are several of many reasons why I am both proud and feel privileged to join your progressive group.

Sincerely yours,
 Robert L. Henkiel
 214 Ridgefield Rd.
 Endicott, N.Y.

Dear Sirs:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for adding our office to your mailing list.

We find your publication interesting, revealing and educational.

Best wishes for continued success in the safe and effective growth of SPORT AVIATION activities.

Sincerely,
 L. R. Tallman
 For R. G. Guerard
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