

News

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One man's dream

by SANDRA SEBESTYEN

To most people, a basement is just a convenient place to store fishing rods or to do the family's laundry, but, to a few others, it becomes the place where their dream machine is going to be built. There is one such basement in Timbergrove, Terrace Bay, where a very unusual project is taking shape right now: the building of a full size aeroplane, piece by piece, from just a set of plans.

The person behind this undertaking is John Fitzpatrick, who works as an engineer for Kimberly-Clark. John is a native of New Brunswick and his involvement with aeroplanes dates back to 1968 when he got a Private Pilot's licence with the air cadets, followed by part time work as a "pointer" (navigator) in the spruce budworm spray program and as an observer in fire detection patrol aircraft.

John, why build your own aeroplane instead of buying one already made?

"Well, there are several reasons I guess: I want a safe aeroplane, capable of carrying 4 people and able to operate on floats; the price for an equivalent factory built aircraft would be around \$35,000 and that is for a used one at that; so cost is definitely one of the reasons, although not the

only one as I also think that the learning experience in itself will make the whole project worth it; and finally, once the aircraft is flying, I will be able to do the maintenance myself and this alone will produce substantial savings through the years."

O.K. John, tell us about the aeroplane itself.

"This aeroplane was known as a PA-14 when Piper Aircraft Company was making it but they built the last one years ago. The plans were later made available to the homebuilt market and the name was changed to "Chubby Cuby" which is just another name for "Fat Piper Cub"; for legal reasons, the name was changed again to "Sportsman 2 plus 2". It is an old, safe and well proven design for which plans, materials and kits are still available."

What about the materials, what is the aeroplane made of?

"The fuselage and the tail are made of steel tube which is welded together and then covered with fabric; the wings are made of wood and then fabric covered as well; on top of that there will be numerous metal fittings, attachments, etc. to be made."

It seems to us that you will have to become very good in different skills like welding, wood work, metal work, covering, etc.

Do you have any experience in working with your hands?

"Yes, I have hands-on experience in carpentry, autom mechanics, welding, etc. As a matter of fact I still keep a '36 Ford Coupe which I converted into a hot rod myself."

When we visited John, he had the plans for his aircraft spread out in his living room, together with some reference books, materials and parts already made. Somehow, going from 20 sheets of drawings all the way to a finished aeroplane looks to us like a monumental undertaking.

We ask John what will it take in time and money to go from one to the other:

"It is supposed to take from 1200 to 2000 hours so doing it part-time, I am looking at 5 years work. As for the cost, the price list says \$12,768.50 for the airframe alone; the engine, the propeller, the instruments and the floats are all extra."

And why floats?

"Well, that is the main reason behind all this; I want to be able to go fishing on it. I am crazy about fishing."

Like many fishermen, John is full of fishing stories but he also backs them up with some pictures, color slides which, when projected on the wall, not only make the pickerel look larger-than-life but



John Fitzpatrick

make one forget that it is winter outside. Right now, flying, fishing, lakes and summer days seem to mix very well.

John's wife is nearby and we ask her:

Pat, how do you feel about flying?

"It doesn't bother me to fly in Air Canada but,

frankly, I am not crazy about small planes. I've had several chances to ride in them but I have always refused."

And how do you feel about this project?

"Well, I don't really mind all this, but, right now I have other things to think about, like having a baby." Pat is expecting their second child and, as

of this writing, it was due at any time.

John, now that everybody knows that you are building an aeroplane in your basement, do you feel that the pressure is on you to finish the project?

"No, I'll just keep on going at my own pace."

In that case you won't mind if we came back same time next year for a "pro-

gress report"?

"Not at all."

Just one more question: how are you going to get the aeroplane out of the basement when it is finished? That basement door just doesn't look big enough.

"Well, I guess I'll just have to tear the wall apart. It is too bad but, after all, priorities are priorities."



3rd Annual Midget Hockey Tournament details on page 8

A search for history

On February 18th, the Terrace Bay Public Library began a new history project with the primary goal of preserving items of our local heritage and making these accessible to public library users.

Jean Marcella, head librarian, will supervise Paul Barry who will comb the community in search of photographs, old correspondence, minutes of meetings, post cards, reports, telephone directories, scrapbooks, diaries, and many other items.

Paul can be reached at the Library, 825-3819. Also at his home during the

evenings, 5-8 p.m. 825-9021.

There are three basic steps to a history project of this sort. The first is to contact all the local and district institutions and to make an inventory of the various things available at each place. Co-operation will be sought from school boards, service clubs, churches, newspapers, senior citizen homes, industries, businesses, the hospital, and others.

The second step is to invite residents to donate and/or to loan their old photographs and the like. Personal recollections will

be recorded in interviews.

The third step is to organize and to arrange all of the acquired materials for public use.

As well as the aid and advice of a Regional Library consultant, the library will have the guidance of a local history committee.

By August 1985, when this history project comes to an end, Terrace Bay will possess a solid foundation for the continued preservation of our community's history.