WHY OUR MEMBERS ARE BUILDING

HOW TO BEGIN?
Well, let’s just say that many years ago I wanted to be a pilot, but eyesight held me back. So I became an aircraft mechanic in the U.S. Air Force. Fast-forward…in 2011 my sweetheart’s brother, Gene, who has built two Zenith aircraft—a CH 2000 and a CH 601—encouraged me to build something, so I got the itch. Not having a pilot’s certificate, I began the process of getting my sport pilot certificate, and I had narrowed down the field of aircraft that I was interested in building.

In March 2011, my sweetheart told me she was going to Texas in June for three months for the birth of a grandchild.

Quick, call Zenith! When can I get a CH 650 kit? April? I’ll be there!

Having carpentry experience, I built a 4-foot-by-2-foot workbench prior to leaving. Excitedly I hooked up my 4-foot-by-12-foot enclosed trailer and headed for Mexico, Missouri, built the rudder for my CH 650, and three days later I arrived home. It was slow going at first. Then in June, I was working 12-hour days on the project. Great fun! In June 2012, assembly/painting was completed and my aircraft passed its FAA inspection. Little Bit was ready, but I had not soloed yet. I needed five hours to qualify for insurance. I called Buzzy of Buzz Air in

Two Planes in Three Years

When my sweetheart travels, I build
BY CLYDE “BOB” RYCHEL

Bob Rychel with the two airplanes he completed in three years—the CH 650 LIttLe Bit on the left and the CH 750 LIttLe Bit Too on the right.
Laurenceburg, Tennessee. He checked my log and completed my flight checks, then endorsed me for solo so I could fly off the five hours in type to qualify for insurance. I was back home in four days. Next, I needed to be checked out at my home field and finish my flight training. My good friend and certificated flight instructor (CFI), Larry Gilbert, completed it. Then I called EAA, which assisted me in acquiring insurance. With this done, I began my 40-hour Phase 1 flight testing.

Finally on October 16, 2012, I called the designated pilot examiner to schedule my FAA checkride in my aircraft. But first, she wanted to learn about the aircraft and its handling characteristics. The next day she called and said, “Okay!” On October 18, with all of my nerves shot, she reached over and said, “Congratulations!” I became a certificated pilot and thrilled beyond words.

My CH 650 Little Bit was a joy to build and is a joy to fly.

AIRPLANE NO. 2

It was April 2013, and my sweetheart just said she may be gone for two months to help her daughter move to Florida. Gasp! What will I do? Quick! Call Zenith to see if I can get a CH 750 kit. Zenith said I could have a slot if I came to its next workshop and built the rudder. Let’s see—I can be there in two weeks, I thought.

In May, I loaded up the trailer and drove to Missouri again, built the rudder, and was back home in four days. Then the building frenzy began! Larry’s wife was going to be gone for a week. Rather than fly Larry’s Citabria, he agreed to be my check co man, making the process quicker. My sweetheart returned sooner than expected, but no problem. I had completed some parts, began the painting, and took the parts to the hangar. In the meantime, I had flown in a Viking-powered 750 and decided I had to have a Viking engine! Then when the Jabiru engine on Aircraft No. 1 failed to start for the umpteenth time, I made a quick call to Jan Eggenfellner at Viking Aircraft Engines and changed my order to two engines!

By now, it was January 2014. I begin removing No. 1’s engine while finishing Aircraft No. 2, loving every minute. Finally, in March 2014, Little Bit Too passed its FAA inspection, insurance was acquired, and flight testing began.

Meanwhile, I was also completing installation of the Viking engine on Airplane No. 1. Once the engine was installed, I completed the paperwork for the engine change, did the five hours of additional flight testing, and notified the FAA.

By August 2014, both airplanes were complete and both were a lot of fun to build!

After flying to the Zenith factory in Missouri, to Sebring, Florida, for the recent U.S. Sport Aviation Expo, and other places here in Florida, my sweetheart and I are planning a
cross-country flight. We plan to go to Prescott, Arizona, then to Winnemucca, Nevada, to visit our brothers. We feel it will be a great adventure, taking one to two months.

In closing, the N-numbers for my aircraft—N5970C and N5970H—have some significance. I graduated from high school in 1959, was 70 years old when Airplane No. 1 was completed, and “C” is my initial; 59 was my sweetheart’s age when I started Airplane No. 2, 1970 was when she graduated from high school, and “H” is her initial.

I need to express lots of thanks for help during these projects: for the patience of my sweetheart during all of this airplane building; to Zenith Aircraft Company for answering all of my questions during the builds; to EAA for its help with an issue with FAA during the inspections; and to my flight instructor and a host of others who helped to get all of this done.

Clyde “Bob” Rychel, EAA 1051181, lives in Mims, Florida.