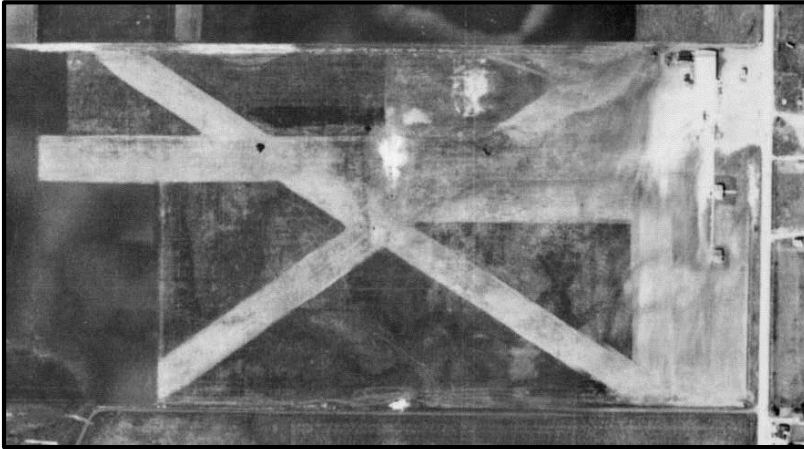


## Autobiography of Gordy Westphal

Growing up in the late 1940's and early 1950's my dad took my brothers and me to the old Eno Ft. Dodge, Iowa airport. This airport was created in the 30's by business man Ellis Eno. It consisted of several grass runways, a couple of large hangars and a small restaurant located in a building on the northeast side of the airport. This is where I saw my first air show. I still remember sitting on my father's shoulders so I could see all the activity. Below is an aerial picture of this airport back then.



As I grew up I made scrap books out of all the newspaper's aviation articles and clippings from Flying Magazine and began to collect photos whenever I could get my dad to drive out to the airport on a weekend for a picture taking session. In the mid 50's an Air Explorer Squadron was formed in Ft. Dodge. After joining the unit, I received my first airplane ride in a 1948 Cessna 170. It was owned by a local business

man, Jim Van Gundy, who ran a flag making company. Our scout troop made trips to Des Moines in the Air Guard C-47 and later toured the Air Force facility at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha and Sioux City's Air Force Base.

My Uncle Stan was learning to fly in Cubs at the Eno airport during the late 30's until WWII curtailed private flying. After the war was over he resumed his training and when his instructor was ready for him to begin cross country lessons they went to Middleton, Ohio. They brought back a new 7AC Champ (N1931E) for its new owner in Ft. Dodge. My cousin recently gave me Uncle Stan's logbooks, which details the trip back showing the trip home was completed in one day. They made stops every hour or two at Lafayette, Streator, Cedar Rapids and home to Pocahontas to drop Stan off. Later in July of 1950 Stan bought his own Champ (NC83729) and flew it off his pasture until July of 1956 when it was sold for health reasons. Every time our families visited together I enjoyed Stan's stories of learning to fly and maintaining the Champ.

Between Christmas and New Year's vacation of 1957 our family moved to Rochester, MN where my father was building new homes as the result of IBM building a new facility and an influx of several thousand employees. After arriving in town I learned of a new Air Explorer Squadron 112 forming under an Air Force Reserve 9709<sup>th</sup> unit sponsoring the group. This group of young scouts had about 8 to 12 boys and we met at the Reserve units meeting rooms or at one of the Gopher Aviation hangars at the local airport. With sponsorship by an Air Force reserve unit we were able to obtain (2) C-119 Flying Box Cars to fly boy scouts around southern Minnesota. This event eventually got to be a safety issue as the parachutes the scouts wore were too large (35 pounds) for the size of the boys. If the parachute was ever used some scouts would have been separated in mid-air from the chute.

While in high school I sat next to a young man (Dennis Finke) who with his father Emerson had bought a Commonwealth Skyraider and were learning to fly. On weekends they kept it at the Rochester airport, which was near their home. Sunday afternoons they would fly it back to their hangar at Roger's Field located 7 miles NE of Rochester. This afforded me another chance to get a ride. Most of all though on these flights I got to meet Roger Tollefsrud who had an 11AC

Chief and Everett and Gary Engel who had bought a PA-12 Super Cruiser and were learning to fly. Their friendship and help enabled me to eventually purchase my own first aircraft a Cessna 120 and hangar it at Roger's airport.

In the winter of 1957-58 a group of IBMers purchased a J3 Cub (N33237), and formed a flying club. They were looking for new members to grow the club and purchased a PA-12 (N7752H). Dale Hugus was the president and he took me up for a ride in the Cub and I signed up immediately. At that time membership was \$125 but they had a minimum age requirement of 21 – which I wasn't yet. At the next meeting they voted to change the age requirement and I became a new member. At the old Rochester airport, all aircraft, except Gopher Aviation's, sat outside and during the winter they needed to be preheated. Gopher had a linesman named Smitty who would come around with a WWII Nelson heater and preheat the engines. I remember many times seeing cowlings with blistered paint when too much heat was applied too fast. Being a kid at the time I was rarely dressed for the cold so felt sorry for Smitty having to be out in the cold all day long. He was the go to guy to get your engine started, fuel or tiedown issues.



I began to take flying lessons on March 29, 1959. At that time most of Gophers flight instructors were WWII pilots who shared a lot of fatherly advice along with the training. Having these men giving advice as they actually lived through many extreme events to survive the war was very much well received. We practiced a lot of stalls in climbing turns, Immelmans, "S" turns and slow flight where the airspeed indicator needle didn't move much. For communication with the local tower we used a battery powered Mitchell Airboy Senior transmitting on 122.5 Mghz and receiving on 278 Kc. In the winter the battery or the whole radio had to be taken out after each flight and stored in the Gopher offices. Usually the flight instructor would handle this as they preferred to be heard rather than have the tower use the light gun. Luckily back then light signals for the low and slow aircraft was the primary means of communicating as these radios didn't work all that well.



I soloed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1959 and then debated whether I should buy a '46 Champ for \$750 that was for sale at Crystal airport in Minneapolis or buy a car. The car won out as I was biking to the airport for lessons in the warm weather or my dad would run me out on the colder days. I made my long cross country from the old Rochester airport down to the Ft. Dodge, IA airport where they were holding a flight breakfast. Back then weather reporting wasn't the greatest so I encountered some early morning ground fog. As I got down in the Clarion, Iowa area I decided I better keep an airport in sight so I flew the highway over to Humbolt and then down to Fort Dodge. The bobber sight gage had quit bobbling about 30 minutes before landing at Fort Dodge so I wasn't too surprised when the lineman's ticket read 11.5 gallons in a 12.5 gallon tank. I continued to fly the Cub through '59 and '60 and then had to switch over to the PA-12 when the club decided to raffle off the Cub and buy a Cessna 170A. Each club member was supposed to sell 10 \$10 tickets. One member didn't sell any of his allotment and one of his tickets won the Cub. I heard he traded it in on a new VW bug. The plane is still flying in the Jackson Minnesota area.

After high school I enrolled in the Rochester Community College and continued to work on my private license. I flew the PA-12 east to Winona to take the Private written exam and after

completing the test started up the plane and headed west to Rochester. After flying for 30 minutes I should have seen the skyline of Rochester. No luck on seeing Rochester so I dropped down when I saw a bunch of white painted rocks on the side of a hill. The word was "RUSHFORD". I had heard of this town but had never been there so I didn't fully know where it was located. Searching the sectional chart I finally found the name but the VOR circle for Rochester's airport was overlaying the town's name. After I figured out the angle needed to get back on course I was home in 20 minutes.

A few more hours were flown with my flight instructor, Darrell Johnson, to work on the maneuvers for taking the check ride. On the last preliminary flight it was very hot, bumpy and muggy. I was flying the PA-12 toward Red Wing on instruments when Darrell proceeded to put the plane in an attitude that I was to recover from on instruments. Upon getting the plane back to level flight he closed the throttle, told me to lift my hood and make an emergency landing. Once I raised the hood I could see I was right over Roger's Field so I spiraled down and made a nice landing. I taxied back and began my climb out when I realized my lunch needed to go immediately. I slid the left pilot's window open, put my head in the slip stream and watched my lunch and my glasses go flying in the breeze. I told Darrell what happened to my glasses and he had me fly us back to the airport which I could but I needed to turn the plane over to him for landing. Two weeks later with new glasses Darrell gave me my check ride and I received my Private license.

While reading my dad's Outdoor Life magazine they had an article on building a Bensen Gyro Copter you could fly in to your favorite fishing location and catch the big ones. I wrote off to Bensen for the drawings and began building my new adventure. After 1 year of work the machine was finished and was ready for flight. I took it out to Roger's Field and was able to hangar with Everett's PA-12. I never was able to get the blades up to peak rpm so after a summer zipping up and down Roger's runway and graduating from RCC, I decided a real airplane was needed. Before I sold the gyro I needed to make one more high speed taxi run down the runway. When I went by the hangars I heard a wop wop, but the engine was running fine. I pulled off the runway and put it back in the hangar. As I got into my car for the ride home I felt that my billfold was missing. The light bulb came on and back to the runway I ran. There lay the billfold with chopped up one dollar bills and my Private license in shreds.



GORDON WESTPHAL of ROCHESTER, MN

Rochester in 1960 relocated the airport to a larger facility 10 miles south of town so all the planes tied down at the in town location moved to the new airport. They had constructed several rows of "T" hangars that were available for rent. Two airplanes were left tied down next to the hangars and one of these was a 1946 Cessna 120 (N77244). The fabric was shot so I made an offer of \$1000 and my gyro for the 120. The two partners took me up on the deal and I now owned a real plane. Everett and Roger helped me disassemble the plane and restore it in Roger's Quonset hangar. A few weeks later Roger and I hauled the wings down to Fanta/Reed in LaCrosse, Wisconsin where Ken Reed would cover them with fresh Grade A fabric that winter. While waiting on the fabric job I proceeded to reupholster the interior and repaint the

landing gear and wheel pants. After the cold weather began to set in Everett and I towed the fuselage down to LaCrosse where the plane could be assembled and given a new license. Come January of 1963 Roger would fly Everett and me down to LaCrosse and we would fly the plane home.



That winter I tied the 120 down on one of Roger's tie downs and began to learn more about winter flying which included starting your plane in cold.

While trying to start it one cold 20° day, without preheating, the engine back fired and the primer gas that drained out the airbox onto the bottom of the cowling ignited. With a battery which was about dead it could not draw the fuel up into the cylinders. Roger saw what was happening from the outside and proceeded to stuff an old army coat into the cowling while hollering at me to keep it turning which was getting harder and harder to do without a fresh battery. Chalk one more experience up in my book of knowledge. Thankfully the engine finally caught which drew the fuel up into the engine.

When the Viet Nam war began requiring draftees in 1963, I received the invite to go up to Minneapolis and have a physical. After passing the physical I knew within a few months I would be receiving my orders to report to the Army so I decided to enlist in the Navy's Air Reserve Squadron VP-815 at NAS Twin Cities. With this enlistment I was able to attend weekend drills and go on active duty 1 year later. With this 1 year wait I would complete more than 1 year of working for IBM and would receive an active duty military benefit from IBM. After joining VP-5 at NAS Jacksonville, Fla. I was placed as an Airman in the electrician shop. The electricians were in charge of everything electrical on the SP-2E Neptune except the avionics.



On deployment in Sigonella Sicily I joined the Navy flying club that owned a 7AC Champ, which was wrapped up in a ball. And a T-34 Mentor. A base club member checked me out for retractable gear and constant speed prop and then I was free to fly around the island. Several of the fellas in the shop wanted to see the island as they weren't on aircrew so we flew often and I never received a bill for use of the plane or fuel.

After our return from duty in Sicily, in the summer of 1965, I was able to join the flight crew as an AE-3 aircrew on the LA-12. The LA-12 was the 12th SP-2E Lockheed Neptune. The reason I got to do this is because their electrician only wanted to fly when the squadron was on deployment. I operated the ECM equipment and still maintained the electrical items on the plane for my remaining year of service in the squadron. Most of the time was spent flying the Caribbean training and looking for Soviet submarines.



In August of 1965 I returned to Rochester on leave and married Eileen Tvedt. We returned to Jacksonville for the remainder of my 2 year enlistment. I had been wanting to build my own airplane so I ordered drawings for a Whittman Tailwind and a wood material kit from Aircraft Spruce. The wood kit arrived and Eileen and I would go to the base hobby shop where she would work on ceramics and I would cut wood and build the wings. At this time the government was surplusng out gas engines that provide power to start early jet fighters and bombers. These were basically a modification of a Lycoming O-290-D aircraft engine. Maxwell Propeller Co. in the Dallas, Texas area was offering engines for \$125 each. One weekend we had a SP-2E that was headed for Houston, Texas and they offered to stop by NAS Dallas, drop off myself and a good friend Chief Dale Kayes, where I could buy an engine and upon their return would pick us up along with the new engine. This engine would provide the power for the Tailwind project. I finished the wings while in Jacksonville and brought them home to Minnesota, Somewhere in the 70's I sold them to Bob Kloppstein and he (I believe) sold them to someone over in Eyota, I should have completed that project.



Eileen and I had been married for 1 year when my enlistment was fulfilled so we moved back to Rochester, MN and my job at IBM. That first weekend home I called Everett up and met him out at Roger's Field where he was now flying a 1958 Mooney M20. That weekend he was planning to fly it to Willmar and trade it in for a 1963 M20A so he offered me a ride. Not one to pass up a ride we flew over together to make the swap. After exchanging planes and papers we headed back to Rochester.

We would be flying close to the Southport airport (Apple Valley) so I asked Everett if we could drop in and see what activity was going on. On our weekend flights we enjoyed dropping in at any airports we would be flying near and if a hangar door was open we would stick our heads inside to see what was being stored. At Southport on the west side was a row of old "T" hangars that contained mostly planes that were built in the 1940's. In the far north hangar sat a Luscombe 8E (N2281K) that didn't look like it had been flown in a long time. I jotted down the N number and we continued our browsing.



That evening I called a friend, Earl Freidine, a FAA tower controller at Rochester, and gave him the N number to research and find out who currently owned the airplane in the FAA's book of ownership.

Later in the week Earl called me back and said it belonged to Walt Kollath, a Northwest mechanic. So I gave him a call to see if it would be available for sale. He said he was building a Cassutt racer and that the Luscombe could be bought for \$3000 as he needed the hangar space. The price was a little high at the time but the plane didn't have any paint except the red

trim and I wanted to do some polishing. A deal was struck and one evening that next week Everett flew me up to Southport and home I came with my new plane. Not out of the Navy 2 weeks and I was back in the air. The plane received a fresh polish, new paint on the bottom of the wings, new interior, instrument panel and a radio. The Luscombe took Everett and I all over Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois for several hundred hours over the next 3 years. By then Scot was born and his mother decided a house was next on the list – so the Luscombe made one final flight to Sycamore, Illinois to its new owner.

A home was purchased and the move was made the end of September 1969. By this time John Hanson and Dick Borg had talked me into building a Rose Parakeet (N16N) (Hannaford D-4) biplane so wood and steel was ordered and I began to build wing ribs. One month hadn't yet gone by when I began to have flight withdrawals. While out visiting with Roger and Everett, Roger mentioned he had a friend who might be selling a J-3 Cub. I asked Roger to look into purchasing the plane and shortly Roger and I were headed to LaCrosse to pick up the new project. The fuselage had been recovered several years prior but the wings needed new fabric before



a new annual could be made. I disassembled the wings, bought new fabric, wing tips, butyrate dope and by spring the wings and the fuselage were ready to go out to Roger's Field for reassembly and a fresh annual. Winter time brought out the ski's that were saved when the Luscombe was sold.

Many flight were made up to

Linwood Lake where Everett's son Gary and wife Carol would have the coffee pot on for 2 cold flyers. The Cub never made it out of Iowa and Minnesota but Scot and Darin got their first plane rides in N6697H and this airplane also is alive and well in the St. Cloud area.



Several members of the EAA Chapter 100 were building hangars at Dodge Center so I joined them with a building that could hold 2 full size planes. The J3 was hangared with Earl Friedlines Piper Tripacer and later Cal McNutts Volksplane.



Gary Engel was also flying a J3 on floats from his lakeside home and before long realized that he needed more load carrying ability so a PA-12 was bought for rebuilding. Flying at 75-80 mph didn't get me there very fast so I also bought a PA 12 (N4219M) from Ward Holiday at Lake Elmo and sold the J3 to a local flyer, Roger Barnes. After a couple years of flying time with the 100 hp engine I felt a little more power would help on those warm days. I purchased a 135 hp Lycoming from Bill Morse up in



Grand Rapids and shortly Walt Mount and I had it installed with a new annual license. All around this plane was the best I owned with reasonable speed, range, and load carrying.

Two flights stand out in my memories in the PA-12. The first one was in 1973. Gary flew his PA-12 up to Ft. Francis, Ontario and Everett and I flew my PA-12 up to Ft. Francis where Gary after unloading fishing gear and the boat at Lake Tesup flew over and picked us up for a week of fishing. We stopped at a small lake before Tesup but only caught Northern's. Later we went into Tesup and caught Walleyes for every meal. One afternoon we flew north to a lodge for a port chop dinner. Friday, Gary took me back to Ft. Francis and after some ground fog around Hibbing cleared I was home that afternoon. The other trip was when Dee Sherden and I flew down to Bartlesville, OK for an antique fly-in. Going down we flew at 10,500 feet to get a nice tailwind. After the 4 hour flight and we landed, I had a headache that lasted for 3 days. Maybe if I would have taken an aspirin before the flight it could have been prevented.



The Parakeet project was well along and by the end of 1977 the cover was installed and assembly was underway through the fall months. First flights were in the winter of '77. I had put about 10 hours on the plane and on one 10°F day I decided to make my first flight over to Rochester from Dodge Center. I had gotten between Byron and Rochester when the windshield was covered with grease like oil from the cold and I figured I had frozen my breather line and blew open the crankshaft seal. A quick 180° turn and I was back at Dodge Center Airport in a few minutes. After

landing and wiping off the goo wherever the oil was slung I saw the seal was OK but the crankshaft oil plug had blown out the front of the crankshaft. A new educational moment. When assembling the engine I failed to seat the plug in the new crankshaft with a wooden dowel after

it was positioned in place. At this time of my flying I had over 1000 hours of time from J-3's to a Navy flying club T-34.



With the Parakeet flying and the Grade A fabric on the PA-12 getting weaker a major OH of the plane was undertaken. An extended baggage compartment was built and the wing tank fuel gages were changed to PA-18 gages in the wing roots. The 300x4 wheels were changed over to a Cleveland 600x6 wheel and brake STC. The rebuild took from 1980 to 1985. During the summer of 1985 the Piper Cub Club held their first fly in at Anderson, IN. Everett and I attended in the PA-12 and the plane was judged best restored Piper. In 1987 I flew the PA-12 to

Lock Haven, PA for its first return to its place of birth. I also flew the plane to Blakesburg, IA and also earned a People's Choice and Best of Type award.

Scot decided he wanted to take flight training after high school so he enrolled in the program at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks. After making this drive a few times I began to shop around for a 4 place plane. A Grumman Tiger (N4524Y) was for sale at Dodge Center so I sold the PA-12 and moved up to the Tiger. Full IFR with autopilot and an engine with 200 hours since major OH. We flew up to Grand Forks several times to attend football games and to pick up Scot for the holiday. These trips were nice as we could also visit my folks at Park Rapids. After a couple years of training Scot decided flying wasn't for him so we



moved him back to Rochester. About this time a polished Cessna 170B was offered to me by a friend of my Uncle Stans at Pocahontas, Iowa. The Tiger was sold to a man in St. Paul who didn't keep it long but sold it to someone in New Hampshire who totaled the plane in the mountains. (The only plane I have owned that's not flying). The 170 (N2889C) was a farmers airplane and I disassembled it and began polishing wherever I could get the original finish to be restored. The undersurfaces of the wings and tail were painted with a Chevy Corvette Silver Pearl urethane which greatly helped to prevent corrosion and lifting that hefty buffer. New red



trim and Cessna decals were applied and the interior headliner and carpet replaced. The seats were still in good shape. The instrument panel was repainted and several instruments overhauled. A com radio went back in the panel but a portable Loran was used for navigation. About the time I was restoring the 170, a neighboring hangar was sold to a fella who was completing a 2 place tandem called a RV4. We got to helping each other out and Ken Brown and I became good friends. Later Ken got the RV4 licensed and flying so we flew the RV4 all over Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin for lunch



or to look at other peoples projects. Some of the places were casinos as Ken enjoys helping the Indians out. Come to think of it he still is helping them out. Al Hanson, a hangar owner next to Ken, bought a 2 place experimental Mustang and with similar speeds we hit many lunch spots together until Al and his wife Arlene decided to retire to southern Michigan. Also another RV4 was acquired by Brandon McNeilus at about this time and he to would be found flying around the area with the faster crowd of planes. After completing his RV4 Ken began work on an RV6.



As I was nearing retirement age a RV6A with tri-gear looked like a project I should build. So in 1997 Ken and I flew down to Boone, IA where I purchased the necessary riveting tools to start a kit. The RV4 was maxed out with people, tools, and fuel but performed well and brought us home to Dodge Center.

Before completing the plane Brandon asked if I would like to go in with him and build a double wide hangar on one of the last spots available where the ground had been prepared and a new

taxiway constructed. Morton buildings put up the hangar in 1999 and that winter Brandon supplied materials and I added purloins and insulation to the hangar. Furnaces were hung on both sides of the building and Ken stopped by and I helped him handle the wiring and install the lights. It was finally nice to have heat and adequate lights. February of 2000 I retired from IBM after 37 years and proceeded to go to the airport just about every day if the weather cooperated.



In the summer of 2002 the RV6A (N17GE) was completed and arrangements were made with John Roscoe from Albert Lea to inspect the plane for its first test flight. The plane flew great and the speed and takeoff performance was more than I had hoped. That winter I decided to sell the 170B and just before Christmas a man

from NW Denver came out with some friends and flew the plane to Colorado. The 170B is still owned by the same man and kept at a private strip NW of Denver. The next summer I built a paint booth and painted the RV Vans Dynamite Yellow.

I flew the RV6A until summer of 2011 when the doctors at Mayo wanted to go in and examine the arteries around my heart. While doing the examination they placed a stent in the upper location. The Olmsted Medical flight surgeon said I shouldn't have any trouble getting a new medical but I decided not to risk being denied by medical so I placed the RV up for sale and in the spring I found a buyer from the Peachtree area of Georgia that wanted the plane. One Saturday morning in April he flew to the Rochester airport. I picked him up and we drove to Dodge Center where Kurt Hiner would check him out and we handle the paper work. At supper time that evening he called from the Atlanta area and had arrived home after a 4 hour flight. I have heard from him only once to ask about the paint color to do some touch up. I check on FlightAware every now and then to see where he has been flying it IFR and he has now loaded a picture of the plane N17GE. It still looks GREAT.

After the operation I decided I would now be flying under Light Sport rules so Stan Blankenship and I drove down to Sulphur Spring, MO and brought home a 7AC Champ (N83387) that needed a total rebuild. This was in the fall of 2007 and the rebuild took until the summer of 2013. The wings received new spars, tips, leading and trailing edges and new hardware. The right hand wing received new ribs and a 5.5 gallon aux tank. The fuselage had new bottom longerons and damaged tubing repaired. New floor boards, baggage compartment, headliner, seats, OH instruments, and a new instrument panel. A local man had a damaged Ercoupe for sale so this was bought so I could install its Continental 90 hp engine in the Champ. I wanted a starter so I wouldn't need a tail tie down or assistance in hand propping. The engine required new cylinders, crankshaft, magnetos, starter, carburetor, airbox, baffling and a prop overhaul. After the fabric was applied I painted it in 1956 Champion colors and paint scheme. A lot of time and effort but it looks pretty much factory original. The factory in the mid 1950's was Holman Field at St. Paul, MN.



There are 85 hours on the plane since rebuild and I still have a couple items I would like to make changes on but it also flies great. I am looking at selling the parakeet in the near future. It has 500 hours TT on it and is not getting flown very much as insurance is more than I want to pay for just a few hours of flying each year. My total flying time is 2967 hours since I started learning to fly in 1959. I should make the 3000 hour mark this summer – 2015.

Stan and I were shooting the breeze at the Dodge Center A/D building in early February when the subject got around to rebuildable projects available in the area and the Piper Colt that was damaged at the Rochester airport several years back. A call was made to the owner and he was looking for someone that had the time to put it back together. A few weeks later the plane was dropped off at my hangar and I now have a windshield trimmed and fitted and ready to install. New Cleveland wheels and brakes have been installed and I have started to clean up the elevators before a fresh coat of Polytone can be sprayed. The wings were repaired and recovered at Owatonna and will be installed once the new W/S is installed. Hope this plane can be returned to the owner by midsummer.

#### Summary of Gordy's aircraft ownership history

- Built Bensen Gyro Copter
- Traded Gyro Copter for a Cessna 120 (N77244) +\$1000
- Built wings for a Whittman Tailwind
- Rebuilt Luscombe 8E (N2281K)
- Built Rose Parakeet 1969-1977 (N16N)
- Sold Luscombe
- Rebuilt J-3 Cub
- Sold J-3 to buy PA-12 – upgraded engine then rebuilt
- Sold PA-12 for a Grumman Tiger (N4524Y)
- Sold Grumman for a Cessna 170 (N2889C)
- Summer 2002 finished building RV6A (N17GE)
- Winter 2002 Sold Cessna 170B
- 2011 sold RV6A (N17GE)
- Between 2007 and 2013 rebuilt 7AC Champ (N83387)