



It Takes a Village to Build an RV

Washington Van's Aircraft RV-9A

MY INITIAL FLYING INSPIRATION was from my father who was a physician and aviator. I can still remember how he made time in his busy schedule for father-son aviating every Wednesday afternoon as we headed to the local airport. That experience hooked me into this lifelong passion, but I was 40 before earning my private pilot certificate. In the following decade, I flew a club Cessna 172N and attended numerous Oshkosh air shows for either business or pleasure. Another influencer, Dr. John Agee, was an acquaintance with several cool airplanes including an exquisitely built RV-6A. I was itching to start my own homebuilt project and initially had been considering a Lancair Legacy. Dr. Agee advised that Van's RVs had a tremendous support network and safety record and that I couldn't go wrong with building one.

The next major inspiration occurred at a local air show when I saw this beautifully built RV-9A by a local Seattle builder, Darin Anderson, EAA 1108493. This RV-9A had certain elements like a sexy three-bladed prop, sleek engine cooling inlets, and a slider canopy that established the foundation for what I was later to build in my own RV. I consulted with Darin off and on throughout my build as well as visiting his well-documented personal builder website. He and his best friend (a Boeing A&P mechanic guru) were the first of

many experienced builder advisers — the start of my village — who helped shape the airplane I own today.

With all these inspirations, the RV-9A was the ticket. Starting in 2007, I ordered the “gateway drug” empennage kit and tools from Van's and Cleaveland Tools. For the next five years between work and family, I completed the tail feathers in my garage. In 2012, I moved into a hangar shared with an aviator buddy where we had stuffed a Cessna 172 and two RV kits. For the next 12 years, linear progress was made with the help of numerous people I met from the GA community.

I can't emphasize enough how much building a strong network contributes to the successful and safe build of an experimental aircraft. There aren't enough words in this article to give recognition for the many individuals who made this possible, so I'll break the “village” down into a few categories: 1) a close aviator buddy like my friend John who I have shared the hangar with — also an RV builder, 2) local aviator builders and pilots, champion aerobatic racers, expert Boeing mechanics, as well as airport bums who are always around for helpful advice, tools, and techniques, 3) builder websites, YouTube, EAA workshops, and AirVenture forums, 4) suppliers such as Van's Aircraft, SteinAir, Garmin, GUMPS Aviation, SunQuest Air,

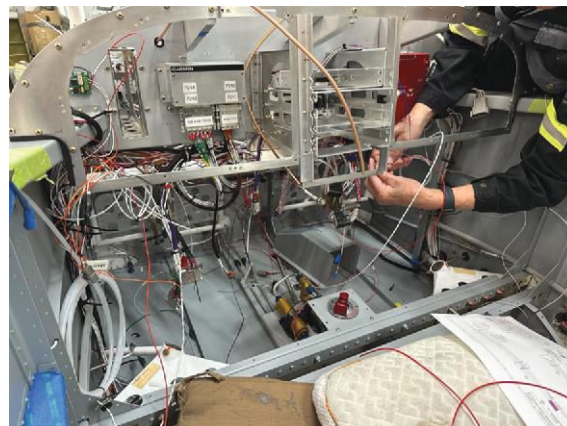
Aerosport, FlyBoys, and TS Flightlines to name a few.

A key requirement was for this RV to be a premier cross-country IFR machine. SteinAir and others provided great advice in selecting and laying out the flight deck. I built my own highly detailed schematics and wire harnesses using draw.io so that the drawings were viewable online at any time. My advisor, Dennis Jones, EAA 414466, of GUMPS Aviation, helped educate me on the perils of “short wire Charlie”! The carbon-fiber panel was from Aerosport, all Garmin IFR glass included dual G3X EFIS, GTN 650Xi, GTR 200, GMC 507 plus GSA 28 pitch and roll autopilot servos, G5, GMA 245, and the VP-X Pro electronic circuit breakers. The Garmin sensors and GEA 24 provide

amazing engine monitoring performance capabilities.

On March 19, 2024, I conducted the first flight with a pilot friend flying chase and his passenger taking air-to-air photos and videos to memorialize the day. Over the next few months, Phase I testing and sign-off culminated with packing the airplane for AirVenture 2024. All legs over the three days were flown IFR with the new amazing Garmin flight deck. I arrived early on the full-procedure IFR RNAV approach and then to Homebuilt Aircraft Camping to set up camp and relax! Over a cold beverage I thought about how it took a whole village of friends and strangers to bring this magic carpet to life.

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