



# PROPWASH

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190

Tennessee Valley

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## **Tom Rain's Sportsman 2+2 OR HOW HE DID IT IN TWO WEEKS.**

Since you're reading this newsletter, you have an interest in "experimental" or so-called "homebuilt aircraft"...you may even have considered building one yourself, or are actually somewhere in that long process of planning, budgeting dollars, building, rebuilding, looking for a place to start, looking for a bigger place now that you have a tail connected to a fuselage, or selling that box of "parts"... well, you get the picture.

Although I was a guy with several thousand hours of flying some pretty neat military airplanes and helicopters, and access to some reasonable amount of credit and disposable dollars, I never considered aircraft ownership, much less building my own flying machine. Although I have a decent schedule, as a small business owner, I never seem to have quite enough time really to get everything done. And, at 63 years old, three to nine years of building my own airplane didn't sound practical. Merely joining the aero-club at Redstone, or just renting periodically from a local FBO didn't seem to satisfy the "itch" either.

Then one day in February 2007, I came across the craziest, even bizarre article in "KITPLANES" magazine by the editor Marc Cook. He talked about a claim by Glasair, a company that I had never heard of before, that you could build your own Glasair Sportsman 2+2 in their factory over a two week period! Marc had actually built his Sportsman in the kind of prototype demonstration program the year before. I called Glasair and talked to their marketing folks about the Two Weeks To Taxi (TWTT)



program. They kindly referred me to a couple of others who had built Sportsman 2+2s in the TWTT program, and then I called Marc Cook himself. After lots of talking, thinking, and prayers, I sent in my deposit and got a slot to build my own Sportsman during the summer of 2006.



Most of you will understand what Glasair found out over the years with their customers. They discovered that approximately 4/5ths of the time to "build" an airplane is the getting ready and cleaning up... reading and trying to understand the instructions, finding the right tools, building the tooling, finding storage for to-be-built materials, already or partially built parts, setting-up, cleaning-up, trying to find a buddy (hopefully one with some skills) to

come over Friday night to help... only to get the call that his wife, or her husband, has other plans for them..."maybe next time"... then, well along your plan, say two years and seven months into the build, you



have to get back to finishing something you had started two years and four months before, and you can't remember quite exactly how you had done the work, so you have to get back in that assembly manual again to refresh yourself for the 15th time... well, again you get the picture. "Been there, done that, got the T-shirt", I hear you thinking right now.

Well, here's the deal with TWTT.

When I contracted with Glasair (yes, that meant when they received my deposit), they sent me a DVD of the entire Assembly manual and recommended that I start familiarizing myself with the tools, tooling, methods of building. Since I had no experience, they also recommended that I seriously attend an EAA workshop or two before I arrived. I did attend a sheet metal weekend class in Dallas. I had a great time, learned a lot, and met some really super folks who were at various stages of building or considering building. That time was well worth it, once I started my adventure at the factory. I did completely go through the Assembly DVD over a four-five month period and was ready when I arrived at the fantastic Glasair facility in Arlington, WA to build my Sportsman over the next 14 days.



Each 10 hour day started at 7 am with a briefing of the day's schedule by my team. Then I would have one of the team members assigned to me for the next project. All tools, materials, and plenty of oversight and instruction was provided depending on my particular skill level or understanding of what was to be done. The expertise level, and attitude of the entire Glasair team was professional, always friendly, and incredibly patient. Patient, but always pushing to stay on, or at time, recover schedule. Throughout the day the team chief would go over the work flow charts with me, giving me a good picture of what was next and getting my signature on the critical elements that we had completed. At every point that the FAA requires evidence of my direct "touch labor" I was advised, digital photos were taken, then I signed off the flow chart. I personally touched every significant and critical part of the build. I tell folks that it was like being a brain surgeon in the operation room..."the place was perfectly organized... all the tools were placed in my hand at exactly the right time... when I was through, someone took the tool and put it away, cleaned up everything, and I moved to the next work table or work area and dove in, per their instructions..." You can see how the time consuming elements that have nothing to do with the actual construction of the airplane were eliminated. I also had the finest, latest state-of-the-art tools, tooling/gigs, and expertise just when I needed it.

Other than the Sunday off halfway through the 14 days, I worked 10 hour days, with 30 minute lunch breaks, and had one of the greatest adventures of my life. Actually at the end of the 13th day, we pushed my beautiful machine out of the hanger, I cranked that IO 390X 210 hps up and, as the Glasair Sportsman TWTT program claim states, I taxied it out onto the ramp. It was all I could do to keep from heading for the runway. Somewhere around the 10th day I got to go out and fly the company's demo Sportsman with a company pilot. It flies like a dream, lands and takes off in about 300 feet, and has all the power and speed that I need. All airplanes are of course designed around capabilities and compromises.

I didn't have the joy of a three to eight year build, but I did get an experience of a lifetime. I also know my Sportsman inside and out... every time I push or pull something, I can see all the parts moving in my mind. I have the full IFR option that includes a Gamin 530/430 WAAS stack, an Advanced Flight System's 3500 and 3400 combination and full TruTrak autopilot. I sure look forward to flying in to Moontown soon to let ya'll have a look at an airplane that was built in two weeks! Don't hesitate to call on me with any questions. Mike Murdock, out of Madison County will be building his Sportsman in the TWTT program this summer. Mike owns a beautiful A200 with full glass and a Cirrus, but he's looking forward to his adventure this summer. Steve Johnson, 26000 hour retired American Airlines pilot from TN, builds his this August. There is a TWTT Sportsman in Troy and one down close to Tuscaloosa... before you know it we'll be giving the Vans some some competition. By the way, Glasair and Vans have formed a TWWT joint venture of sorts to build RV 10s and 7s at Arlington.

Tom