

'E-Z Greider'

By Marga Fritze
All Bob Greider wanted was an airplane to tool around in; nothing especially fancy — just something to take out on trips.

Greider, however, is an over-achiever.

Last summer, the Escondido, Calif. resident came home from a trip to Oshkosh with some extra cargo in his Long-EZ — a trophy proclaiming his airplane the 1991 Plans Built Grand Champion.

"We started the plane simply to build a daily driver," he said. "Something that would be suitable for going on trips; not particularly nice, but something that's real solid (and) could be easily maintained."

But he got carried away. Greider kept rebuilding and redesigning until he had put in four years, more than 3,000 hours and had a whole new plane. His devotion to doing it all himself included hand-laying and forming the prop, personally plating the metal parts, building the avionics and instruments from kits, tearing down and rebuilding the Lycoming O-320-E2D engine and retiming it.

His wife Ginny personally stitched the entire interior and participated in as much of the building and construction as possible.

Not that he meant to do it all himself.

The problem was, he said, when he first started building the plane in Tucson he had expert advice, even when he



BOB GREIDER'S Long-EZ was Plans Built Grand Champ at Oshkosh this year. Jim Koepnick

didn't want it.

Just around the corner lived Gary Licht, whose Glasair was winner of the Kit Built Reserve Grand Champion in 1989, and Bob Eckes, last year's Plans Built Grand Champion for his Long-EZ.

They offered expert advice on a regular basis.

"Typically, you'd get the friendly critique of 'Stupid, do it again. Do it right,'" Greider laughed and continued, "and so, to keep them off your back, you'd normally build each part three times."

"That's not really one airplane down there, that's three airplanes," he continued. "The

other two are in the trashcan."

Greider's "coaches" apparently were right, at least according to the judges at Oshkosh. The trueness of the aircraft and the meticulous way the plane is put together were factors, Greider believes, in his win.

The 47-year-old ex-military pilot also didn't have to compete against his Tucson advisor, Eckes, since he had already won and Oshkosh rules prohibit a second run at the Grand Champion trophy. It also means Greider doesn't get to defend his title.

The "third" aircraft weighs in at just over 1,000 pounds emp-

ty weight with a fuel range of 1,100 n.m. The plane ran 218 mph in canard-type races last year at Wendover and Bonnevill, Utah on an engine dyno-ed under 140 hp, Greider said.

"The aircraft is really best suited for long distance travel," he said. "I came back from Abilene, Texas last week and averaged 160 kts. for the entire trip and came non-stop."

Greider's wife bought the original fuselage as a surprise but it proved to be more trouble than it was worth. They sold it to an "ex-good friend in Orange County."

Greider chose to start from

scratch and built a longer and wider fuselage than the original Burt Rutan-design called for.

The fuselage change required adjustments throughout the aircraft.

"I designed this (larger) canopy because the rear seat was larger, the front seat was larger and I wanted a bit more head room," explained the 6-foot, 2-inch former Air Force C-130 and A-10 pilot and Vietnam veteran.

And how does he feel about all that effort?

"I think there's a tendency to make a limosine out of a golf cart occasionally, when all you need is transportation," he laughed.

Considering the long hours he's put into his aircraft one would think the Long EZ was Greider's full-time job. One would be wrong.

During his stint in the Air Force, Greider and his wife started building weapons components and approach aids for special operations units. The business grew and when he retired from the Air Force in 1989, moved to Escondido.

Now Greider is planning to take his "daily driver" on a slightly longer commute — around the world.

"We want to make the trip fairly rapidly and it'll be the first time anybody's done the routing we're looking at in a long time," he said. The route traverses the northern tier of



BOB GREIDER

E-Z Winner ...

Con't from Page A29

Russia, going no further south than Moscow and returning via Alaska.

Greider plans to complete the trip in 20 to 25 days, beginning sometime next summer, but he also concedes a potential stumbling block to the plan. Should the situation, in what used to be known as the Soviet Union, become unstable the trip is likely to be put on hold.

"Obviously, with the situation over there right now, it's pretty open," Greider admitted. "We're just going to see if we can get it done."