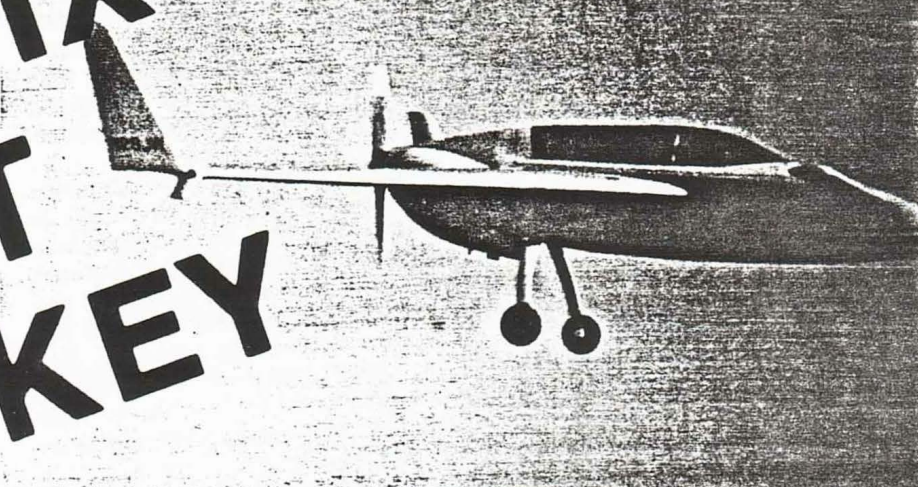


VARI-EZE TWO SIX JULIET WHISKEY



Third flight of 25JW. All goes well and everything works as it should.

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IT'S LIFT OFF time and as the ground melts away below the weariness is suddenly gone, the frustrations and long months of work and waiting for this day are worth it.

For me it began July 22, 1976 when I decided it was time to do something with a dream, and mailed my order for VariEze plans. While at Oshkosh I ordered my basic kit, and the first foam shipment arrived August 26. Mike Kinate and I cut the first foam for the canard on September 5, and VariEze N26JW was underway!

What followed was a period of twenty-two months of delays and frustrations, hard work, record cold winters, a whole lot of new friendships established, a bunch of fun and real satisfaction in seeing an aircraft taking shape under my hands. It was a journey whose destination made the trip well worth it.

Jim Ball, a long time aircraft mechanic and private pilot who works for TWA, was my chief resource for advice and help. He worked with me on all major layups, was always available for counsel, did the complete rebuilding of my Continental O-200 engine, the engine installation, most of the electrical work, and helped with the priming and did most of the paint gun work.

I've been flying since 1943, was a B-24 pilot, and have a lot of time, but was not very current. Toward the end of the building program I met Bill Stansbeary, a TWA pilot assigned to the flight training program. Bill is active and helpful in almost all areas of aviation, and he offered to help me get current before the test flight. In the meantime he introduced me to Sheldon Stafford who was kind enough to let me use his paint booth, and Sheldon's son, Ron, let us use his aircraft for Bill to give me instruction. Bill also gave me some stick time in his Blanik L-13, and I got time in other aircraft, too. Both Sheldon and his wife, Ruth, are top pilots and both ferry aircraft all over the world. Ruth was the pilot of my chase plane, offering her skill and her Bonanza for that task.

First flight for 25JW was Tuesday morning, July 26, 1978, in front of a lot of people who had helped, and a lot more who were just interested: I just had a feeling that the flight would be picture perfect, for I felt good about the little craft. Pride goeth before a fall! After knowing that others had done it, in my excitement I still failed to double check my canopy lock, and it was down on top of the latch fingers, not under them.

All was perfect through the takeoff roll, and rotation and lift off felt really good. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw the canopy flutter and a glance told me I had a problem. I had the safety catch but could not be sure it would hold, so I grabbed the canopy handle with my left hand. In the momentary inattention to attitude and with pitch trim that turned out to have too little up trim I came back on the runway very hard, maybe a little nose wheel first. With a bounce I was flying again with left hand busy with the canopy, right hand busy with the stick, and wishing for at least a third one to reach the trim and the mike button. I now have the mike button on the stick. I just held the canopy and gained altitude, for when I tried to turn loose of the stick the nose would dip down. Finally I could take both hands and lock the canopy.

My wife, Jeanette, and daughter, Jean, were in the Bonanza with Bill and Ruth, and that was heart attack city! They did not know what was going on and could think of all kinds of first flight problems. When I could change radio frequency and say, "You won't believe this, but I failed to lock the canopy!" they knew it was only the nut holding the stick, and no design problem.

The rest of the flight was uneventful, except for the landing. She flew beautifully, required only a little left rudder trim and no roll trim. It would so outclimb the Bonanza even with the nose gear down that Ruth had to request that I do a 360 on the way up. Visual inspection from the Bonanza indicated the nose gear strut was

fractured, and we notified the Kansas City Downtown tower to expect nose gear failure on landing. We declined their offer for emergency equipment stand-by, but they understood this "negative" for they had seen at least two other Ezes on their nose and knew what to expect.

From all reports, including the tower's, my first landing in 25JW was near perfect, which certainly contrasted with the takeoff. The nose held off awhile, and when it came down it continued all the way to the runway. There was hardly any jolt, direction was easy to control with brakes, and I was almost off on the first exit when I stopped. Everything was shut down, I was out and with nose lifted was pulling 25JW home when the others got to me. I had a slightly damaged Eze nose and a considerably bruised pilot ego.

Warren Curd, who built the first VariEze in this area, found me a new strut from another builder not ready to use his, Gordon Durlin loaned me parts I wanted to replace in the nose gear fork, I took everything related to the nose gear apart to check it out, had it all back and was in the air again on August 13, with Ruth and Bill again in the Bonanza to chase. This time everything was fine. But I had missed Oshkosh '78, a goal I had really worked for.

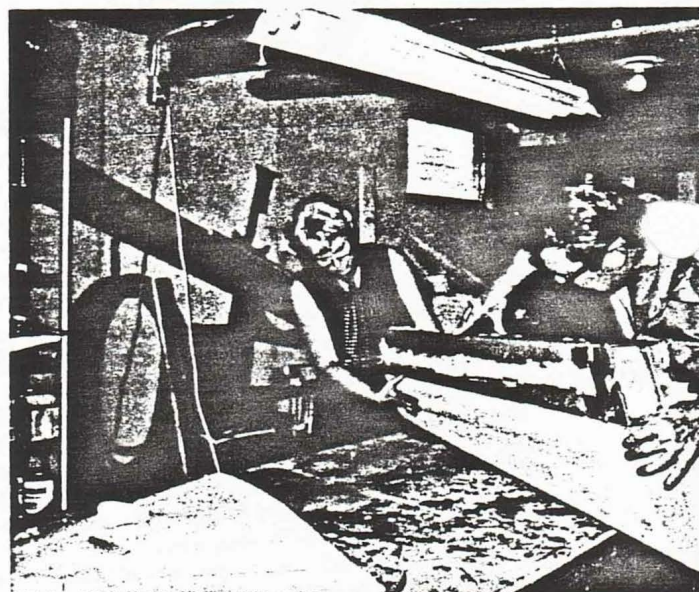
N27JW has given me absolutely no trouble through the 80 hours I have now, and welcomed compliments on the workmanship come wherever we go. When Clarence Graether signed off my restrictions and said, "Jim, it's the best one I've seen," it was again all worth it.

I have the usual instruments including both cylinder head temp and EGT, plus electric T/B, hour meter, Narco Com 10A, Nav 10 and transponder. I'll have the wheel pants and spinner on soon. I started with a Hegy 56 x 70 prop, but it turned too fast. Gordon Durlin let me have his Ted Hendrickson prop and I used it while I consulted with Ray Hegy. Ray made me another prop for no additional cost, this one 58 x 75. It seemed a bit too slow, and Ray suggested trimming down the broad tips, which we did, and now it seems just about right. The Hegy prop will climb with the Ted's and is about two mph faster at the top end, although about 100 rpm slower. At any power setting from 2200 through 2600 rpm it is about five mph faster than Ted's. Some of that does not figure, but it is the way it flies. Ray has been great to work with and really stands behind his work. I can certainly recommend a Hegy prop to those who want a solid performer at a very reasonable price.

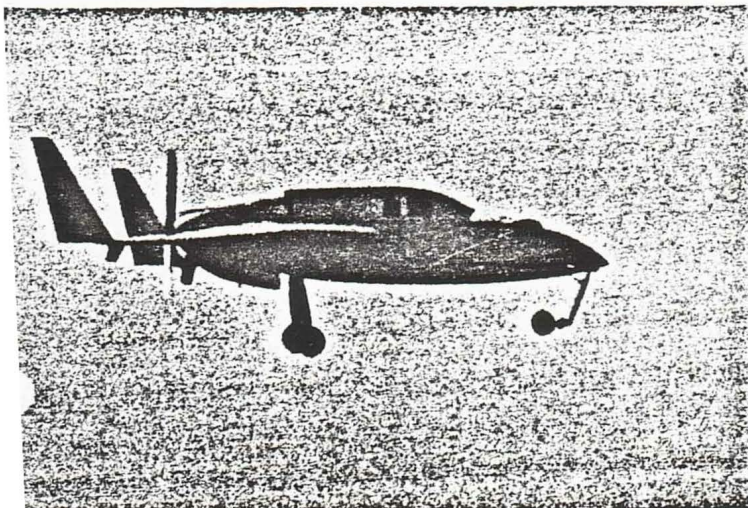
My Eze is heavier than I wanted, with empty weight of 639 pounds, but flying it is fun. On one measured and timed cross country of 150 miles, with a little tailwind, I got 200 mph ground speed exactly. On a trip to Texas I put 14 hours on the Eze, loaded always to top gross



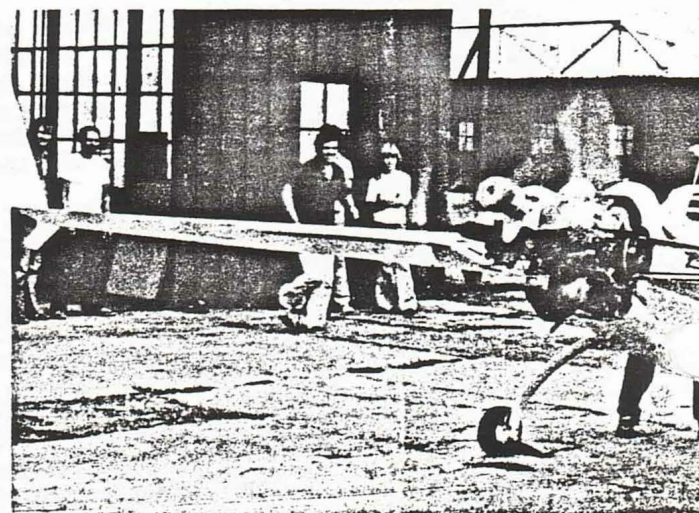
Jim Wright and his "Commander" with their pride and joy.



Builder-Pilot and Commander working together as the spar is fitted to the main wing leading edge.



First flight of 26JW showing the fractured nose gear strut.



First start and run up of the O-200 engine on 26JW.