

The EZ Hanger in Covington, Tennessee, looking at bays one, two, and three with workshop and office windows above.

"EZ HANGAR," SHE SAYS WITH A bright chirp. A long silence follows as Valerie Harris listens attentively to the caller's story, occasionally answering a question with an expert reply.

Unless you're the original builder and hold the repairman's certificate, the EZ Hanger is one of a few places in the United States that can properly repair structural and systems damage to a canard aircraft.

Valerie and her husband, Robert, have been working on EZ-type aircraft for a decade now. Both are aircraft and powerplant (A&P) mechanics. Robert is an FAA designated airworthiness representative (DAR) who specializes in experimental aircraft, and Valerie holds an inspection authorization (IA).

Using their many talents, skills, and experience, Robert and Valerie provide a range of services for owners of composite airplanes. These include condition inspections for canard and other homebuilt aircraft, preventive maintenance, installation of modifications, factory-mandated airframe changes, main gear changes, wing repair, alerts for airworthiness directives (ADs), and major and minor structural repair.

Unlike an individual builder, the pair has seen what works and what doesn't work on numerous makes and models of aircraft. And they have a working knowledge of all the

Of Fiberglass & Foam

The EZ Hanger

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improvements and enhanced techniques that have come along since Burt Rutan first designed the EZs 30 years ago.

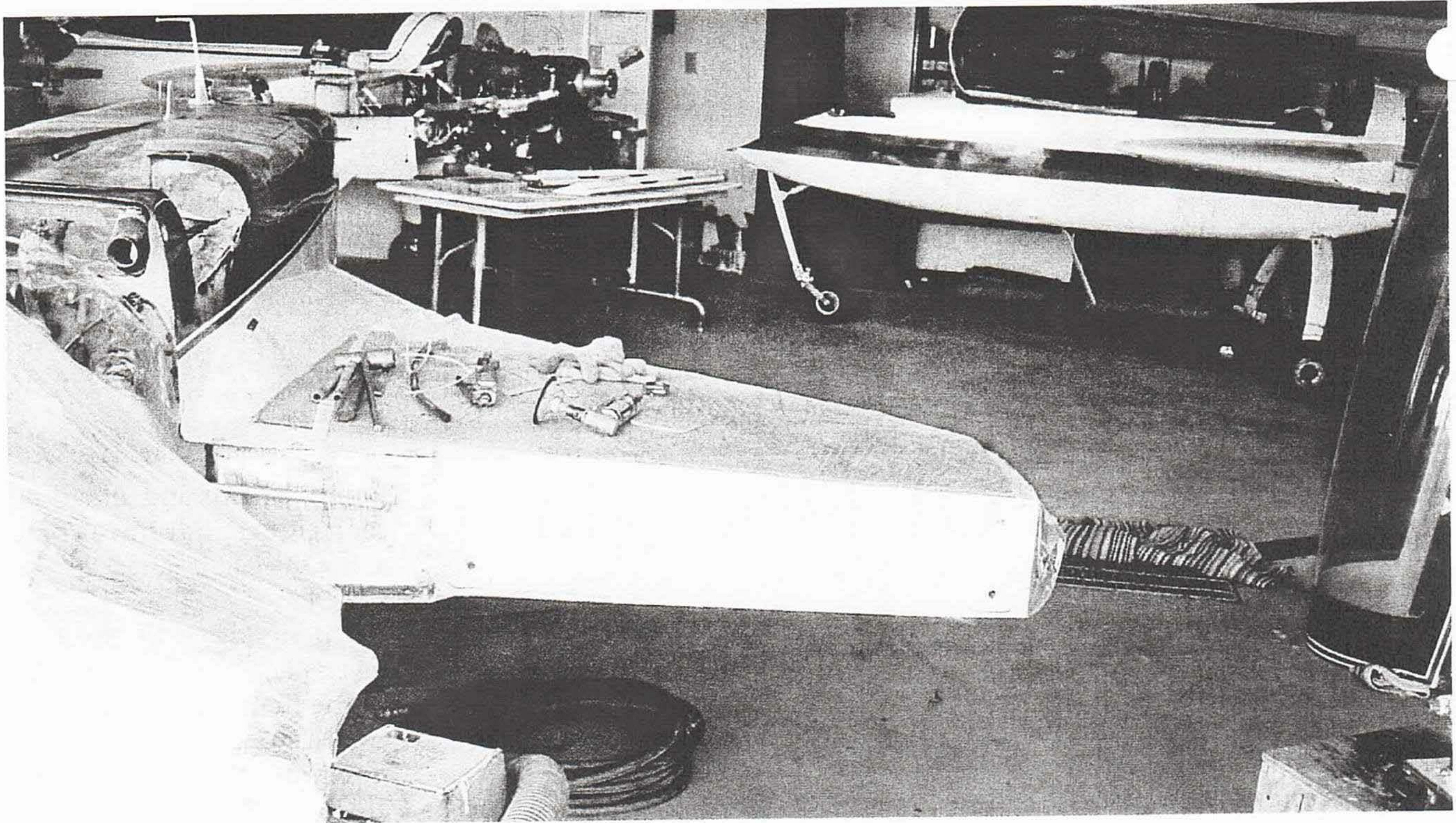
On any day, you can find several Long-EZs and VariEzes in the EZ Hanger facilities in Covington, Tennessee, just north of Memphis. The EZs are in various stages of repair. The Rutan Aircraft Factory no longer sells plans for the Long-EZ or VariEze, but the designs were so popular when they appeared in the 1970s that more of them are being built than any other scratch- or kit-built aircraft. As a result, a number of these glass canards are still flying. Valerie and Robert would like to keep it that way.

The two met in 1988 in Memphis. Always fascinated by aviation, Valerie helped her first husband, who was an A&P, restore a T-34, but he didn't support her pursuit of formal A&P training. It took Robert to do that. He was her mentor, having met her while helping out with the T-34 restoration. He began teaching his eager student a wide range of shop skills, and they married several years later.

Robert has been a line mechanic for a major airline for 15 years and has built two VariEzes. His new wife found a basket case VariEze and bought it, and the two of them restored it and then sold it. The EZ Hanger was born.

To augment the business of ca-

Craft & Technique





Valerie performs a Condition Inspection on a customer's Long-EZ.

nard restoration, their business plan called for completing repair work for aviation insurance companies, and in doing so, they have developed yet another set of unique and valuable skills. "It is one thing to construct a plans-built aircraft. It is quite another to take a wreck and not only make it look good again, but be structurally sound as well," says Valerie.

The pair has literally resurrected canard pushers others would have written off as totaled. These wrecks arrive at the shop looking like an untidy mass of splintered fiberglass and wires. A few months later they're once again airworthy craft. It is amazing what these two can accomplish.

Currently, Robert and Valerie find their business evolving again. Robert, an expert draftsman who thinks in three dimensions, likes thinking up new features for canard aircraft that provide increased utility and performance. Since Robert and Valerie got into the design business, many canard aircraft have benefited from Robert's various improvements. These skills led the pair to a contract to design and construct Les Shockley's Twin Jet canard, an air show plane based on the Long-EZ. The Twin Jet airframe was completed in 2001.

Their new venture is the design and preliminary construction of the Valkyrie, a single jet engine aircraft based on the Long-EZ. They estimate the Valkyrie will fly in two years. This jet-powered canard has a foot wider fuselage than the original Long-EZ, fully retractable gear, dual cockpits with split canopies, and a beefed-up structure for the higher gross weight and to support the GE T-58 jet engine.

Both Robert and Valerie are testimonials for realizing your dreams and having the courage to stay with it. When asked what advice they would provide to those, young and old, yearning to get into aviation, Valerie says, "No matter what happens to you, never let your hopes or desires settle for second best."

You can reach the EZ Hangar at 901-475-3686.

