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COMMENTARY / AIRWORTHY



Pre-buys

Advice for secondhand homebuilt buyers

BY LISA TURNER

IT WAS A STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL DAY AT OSHKOSH. EAA AirVenture was fully underway under bright sunny skies, a light cooling breeze, and the hustle and bustle of aircraft and people moving between colorful vendor displays. It was a feast for the senses, inspiring excitement and anticipation. My stride lengthened.

"Hey, slow down," my friend Gus said.

"Come on! There's too much to see to lounge around," I replied.

"But we have all day!" Gus shook his head. "How come I don't have your energy?"

"Because you're not buying an airplane today."

"What about your Pulsar? Are you keeping it?"

A pre-buy is not a condition inspection. Nor is it recorded anywhere in the logbooks. Because a pre-buy is an informed opinion, it may be better to call it an "evaluation" since pre-purchase "inspections" do not fall under any FAA inspection regulations.

I stopped and turned around. "I would love to keep the Pulsar," I said. "But I'm not going to be able to afford two airplanes."

"That means you will sell it?" Gus cocked his head and looked at me sternly. "How could you?"

"You're making it sound like I'm selling my dog."

"Worse," Gus replied, giving me another evil-eye look.

PRE-PURCHASE TIPS

Here are some pre-purchase evaluation tips to make sure the pre-buy gives you the information you need:

- Find an independent expert unaffiliated with the owner but familiar with the aircraft model.
- Keep in mind that a pre-buy evaluation is an opinion. Airworthy today can be un-airworthy tomorrow.
- Should you still get a pre-buy if the airplane in question just came out of a condition inspection with flying colors? Yes.
- Not all A&Ps and DARs are avionics experts, too. Consider having a qualified avionics shop check out any sophisticated avionics and electronics in the aircraft.
- The person doing the evaluation should not be receiving any commissions related to the sale.
- Ask what kind of report you will receive with the pre-buy. Some facilities will provide very thorough write-ups and include detailed photographs.