May 1, 1977

Dear Sonerai Planholder,

The Sonerai works have some new and additional faces. First off there's me. While I'm not completely new to some of you, I am now a full time, full fledged part of Monnett Experimental Aircraft. I've talked to many of you in person at various fly-ins and over the phone, and I've even written some of the early news letters, but now I'm here 12-14 hours a day, with John. The original idea of coming on full time was that both of us would then be able to stay home a few evenings instead of John trying to run all aspects of the business all day and both of us coming in every night until midnight. In my case, after working a full day at my regular job.

After reviewing last year's statistics, as well as the problem areas, the decision became obvious that I'd have to seriously consider quiting my job and all the security that went with it, to pitch in here, as well as do something I am really interested in and enjoy. Hopefully some of you are noticing some improvements in getting questions answered and orders filled. Let's face it, John was never Mr. Speed when it came to answering mail. I tried to help in the evenings when I came in, but wasn't always successful.

Now with John out in the shop or in his drafting room he can work on new designs, as well as keep up on modifications and or problems any of you are having during construction. The letters or technical calls I can't answer get referred to John to make sure you get the right information.

Our single biggest problem is keeping things in stock on the shelf for immediate delivery. In general, we feel we are still doing well, with a few notable exceptions, i.e., landing gears, cowlings, and a few of the engine conversion castings. As you know, these are custom made parts that are all hand made. The cowlings we've just sold faster than we could have them made. We do have a good stock of E-V cowls now (mainly because of a mistake by the fiberglass maker in that he filled a Super Vee cowl order with E-V cowls)

The delay on the landing gears is two-fold. First you must remember we are always trying to supply the highest quality components at the lowest possible price. The aluminum bar stock to make the landing gears is not cheap and we have to order it in special bars. In order to keep the final cost low we need to order large poundages at a time. In the past, we had to add our order to that of another company to get to the minimum poundage. Well, we've got plenty of aluminum now, but getting the blanks cut out, the edges machined, and the gears bent is also a problem. Again, to keep the costs down, the fellow that does most of this does it in the evenings in his spare time, at a friends machine shop when the machines are free. We could probably have all the gears made in a day or two, but the costs would go up quite a bit as we'd have to pay regular shop labor rates. Try to bear with us a little longer. I know some of you need gears really bad.

Hopefully, all of you will notice an improvement in service in the near future as I gradually get our stock built up and kept up. No doubt some of you are in a retail business and have an idea of the problem of keeping shelfs stocked when you have to depend on so many suppliers with various lead-time. One more thing in this respect. We have added two more employees to help speed up the shipping of orders. They're part time now, but will be full time this summer when school is out.

Now that I've been doing the mail the last few months, there's been several questions that keep coming up, I'll try to answer for those of you that haven't got around to asking yet.

Axles and steps, these are not included in any of the kits we supply. As outlined in the plans we have merely used a 3/4" hardware bolt welded to a steel plate for the axle. It has worked fine on our original Sonerai I and II. Both planes have nearly 500 hours each and the axles have never caused any problems. I know a lot of you are machining your own, and this is fine. We've made some ourself and gave some thought of offering them, but the cost would have been way to much and not worth it since the simple 3/4" hardware (coarse thread) bolt works fine. The front step on the Sonerai II can be made out of most anything. As a last minute thing before we took N2hX to Oshkosh the first year, we grabbed a scrap piece of aluminum, bolted it on and filed it to shape. If you want to use aluminum we suggest you go to a local machine shop and see what kind of scrap they have laying around. They may even give you a piece.

Several of you have noticed and questioned why we have metalized the cockpit section (sides & bottom) of our aircraft. Basically, there is no real good answer. John thought it would be a good idea so you could remove them for maintenance. Well, we've never really used this feature. In short, metalizing the cockpit area merely adds weight as it really isn't any easier than putting fabric there.

Another item that is not in any of the kits is the aluminum needed for the turtle deck, canopy skirt, floor board and seats. You'll note we still have a special in our catalogue on slightly blemished sheets of .025 X 48 X 100 alclad. These are a real bargain and they work fine for those areas. Some sheets have crimped edges where they were mis-handled by the trucking company and all have light scratches here and there. These sheets are perfectly usable whenever you're going to prime and point the surface.

There are around three dozen of you flying and every now and then we hear of someone else that's been flying awhile. While there is no requirement or obligation we really would like to know who has flown and who is very close. Again, a photo would be really nice. We have a nice album started and plan to have it on display at Oshkosh and some other large shows this year. Several of you are getting close to flying as I've received several letters and calls about the first flight. My only real firm suggestion is DO NOT do any high speed taxie tests, but DO taxie around alot. Remember you'll need LEFT rudder. Once off the ground climb to 500 ft. before any turns if at all possible. Landing should be no problem, just use a full stall and if you have tracked your gear properly roll out should be simple with no tending to ground loop. Engine temps on initial flights should be: Cylinder head up to 425°F climb out, down to 350-380°F cruise. If it remains real high check to see if the thermalcouple is tight around the spark plug. Oil temp can go to 230-240°F as long as the pressure stays above 20 pounds or better unless your using synthetic oil. The oil should come down to 190-200°F in cruise. If it stays around 225-230°F you should seriously consider a cooler. E G T should be around 1050-1200°F. RPM on climbout 3000 to 3300. We like to see a static of at least 2900 RPM. If your using a Warnke ground adjustable you may want to flatten the pitch a little so you get 3100 RPM. This will give you a good climb but will only show about 130 mph cruise at around 3600 RPM. If your airspeed is close to being accurate you should be able to lift off at 60-65 mph, and fly final around 80 mph.

FOR FIRST FLIGHT

As for progress around here it's never fast enough as far as we're concerned. The fiberglass fuselage is coming along slow. As mentioned before we're having a hard enough time getting our fiberglass man to keep up with cowling and wheel pant orders, so we haven't pressed him to work on the fuselage shell. John has been working feverishly on the sailplane and powered sailplane designs. We are still having to finish the sailplane [illegible]

Both will have a 36-38 feet span, constant cord, "I" beam spar, fully cantalievered wing. They will have a small welded tube truss covered with a fiberglass or ABS plastic shell and a large canopy. There will be a boom to an all-flying upright "V" tail, and a single retractable wheel. The wings will be covered with one piece of aluminum and will be bonded to the ribs. The engine for the powered version will be the 24 hp. Sach's rotary. At this point we are estimating an L/D for the pure sailplane in the low 30's and the powered version around 28:1. There is no printed information available at this time.

A few other items of interest. We're going to have another builders workshop/seminar June 4th and 5th. Registration will be 8:00 A.M. Saturday, June 4th both days will run until about 5:00 P.M. Saturday night we'll have an informal gathering for talk, drinks and some movies. There will not be any college credit offered this time. There will be a $20.00 fee for registration. If you think you might attend please give us a call or drop us a card so we know how many to plan for.

You might also be interested in knowing we have two forums scheduled for Oshkosh this year. The first will be Saturday July 30, 1977, 12:00 to 1:15 P.M. in Forum tent No. 2A. This will be on the Sonerai's and the V.W. conversions. The second will be Sunday, July 31, 1977, 12:00 to 1:15 P.M. at the same location and this will be on the Sonerai's (the sailplanes).

One last thing, if any of you for whatever reason decide to sell your project or completed plane it might be to your advantage to call us or drop a line. A week doesn't go by that I don't receive several calls or letters wanting to know if we know of any Sonerai's for sale.

Remember if you've flown your Sonerai we'd sure like to know about it, and a picture would be real nice. When you write with a question or a problem it would speed your reply if you would include a return envelope.

Keep Building,

Gregg Erikson

P.S.
Now that I'm here full time I'd really like to have these news letters come out regularly 4 or 6 times a year. To do this I need feed back from you. While I do hear about some of your problems, I would like to hear how you solve them. We've received some good tips from some of you in the past, but I'm sure there could be alot more.

FOR SALE

Sonerai I fuselage completely welded and chromated, on gear with axles made, tires, tubes & brakes. Covered from rear of cockpit back with Cooper Super Shield. New cowling all fitted, piano hinge and firewall made. Engine mount, rudder and brake pedals, control stick and torque tube, and seats all installed. This fuselage was originally built after the plans were drawn up to determine mistakes in the plans. It has been hanging on our ceiling ever since. Needs wings and tail feathers. Ready to be towed home. $2,500.00