

From Pete Peterson
On Charles Rubeck

I met Charlie at the 1st or 2nd meeting Garland held when he trying to reactivate EAA Chapter 83. At that meeting Charlie said, "I'm not a pilot, but I'm a carpenter and I'm going to learn to fly and build a wooden airplane." I had a set of plans of the Pietenpol Air Camper and offered them to Charlie to study and decide if that design fit his needs.

Charlie joined the chapter and attended meetings regularly. In the next few years, he got his private certificate at the grass strip near Gosport, and he built a Pietenpol. He also became a fixture at the gathering of Pietenpol builders at Brodhead, Wisconsin.

Charlie flew the Piet to many chapter 83 fly-ins in the last half of the 1970's, including trips to HUF for the air show chapter 83 co-sponsored in 1976 & 1977. The Piet was wrecked when he spun in from pattern altitude at Lincoln trails Park in October of 1978. I believe it was a wind shear type of incident and Charlie had only minor injuries.

In a couple of years, the Piet was rebuilt and back in the air. He flew it to Brodhead several times and a few times to Oshkosh. I don't know how many years he flew the Piet, but eventually it reached the point that it needed extensive refurbishing he never found time for. So it was disassembled and finally sold.

While he was flying and after his Piet was retired, Charlie became well known in the Pietenpol world as the builder of quality wing ribs. Each year, he would take 4 or 5 sets to Brodhead and to Sun-N-Fun. He told me recently that he thought he had sold at least 100 sets of Pietenpool ribs in the US and Canada. In the last few years, several antique builders he had met at Brodhead asked him to build ribs for their projects. Those I know about include a Waco ASO project in Ohio and Dick Weeden's Rearwin Speedster at Brodhead. In July, he delivered sets of ribs for 4 Curtis Wright Junior projects (2 at Brodhead, 1 in Kansas, and 1 in Oregon).

So for years to come, a significant number of homebuilders and antiquers will be carried aloft by wing ribs built by a quiet man from Spencer, Indiana, our friend, Charles Rubeck.