

A MUCH RELAXED DAVID PETERSON LEANING AGAINST THE BEECH D-18 HE SPENT MANY HOURS FLYING. CIRCA 1948

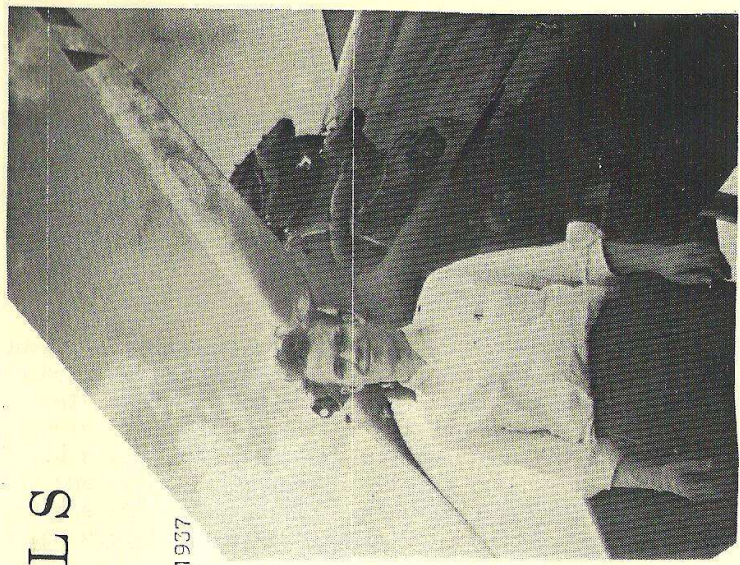


1199 Dunsyre drive  
LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA  
94549

SUMMER 1986 V5 #3  
WHALES ON

WHEELS

DAVID STANDING NEXT TO THE CESSNA J67 IN 1937



**ULTRAVAN**

TC:

V5 #3

WHALES ON WHEELS IS A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF GROUP ULTRA VAN, A CORSA CHAPTER.

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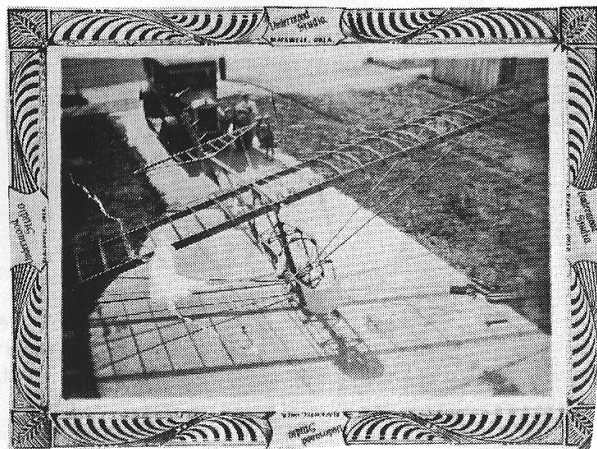
GROUP ULTRA VAN is dedicated to the preservation and use of ULTRA VANS. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 360 units were built. For a full story, read the April 1980 (Vol. 2, Number 8 ) CORSA COMMUNIQUE, For this issue please send \$3.00 to CORSA. 2506 Gross Point Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201. Phone (312) 475-7300

THIS ISSUE OF WHALES ON WHEELS IS DEDICATED TO DAVID PETERSON THE BUILDER AND DEVELOPER OF THE ULTRA VAN. HE AND YOUR EDITOR RECENTLY SPENT SOME TIME TOGETHER AND THE FOLLOWING STORY WAS THE OUTCOME

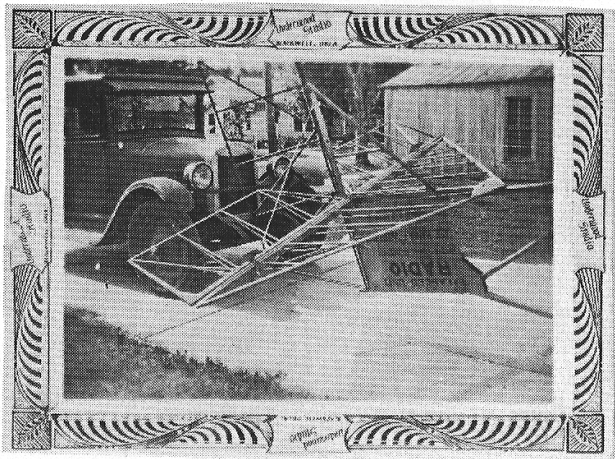
David Peterson was born in 1914 in Minnesota. His father worked for the mill, and was also a preacher. He, his mother, father and sister moved to Blackwell, Oklahoma in 1929. David helped his carpenter father build a trailer to tow behind their 1926 Chevrolet for the trip. His father suffered from arthritis and the 50° below zero winters were a discomfort which prompted the move south to Oklahoma.

David learned the carpenter trade from his father. He relates how he was taught to sharpen the blade of a plane so sharp you could shave with it. He learned that you could do many jobs with a good sharp plane.

His father died when David was 15 years old. He became the sole support for his mother and sister. Being in high school at the time, this was quite a task. He moonlighted projects at the high school woodshop to help pay the rent. In high school, he used his woodworking skills to build a primary glider. This was an inexpensive way to learn to fly. Using his own design, (sounds like David), based on standards of the day. He wanted to make it easy to assemble and disassemble. This way he could keep it at home and not have to pay tie-down rent. (That's how gliders do it today). The town council liked his glider (and him) so well, they let him keep it at the airport for free. David taught himself how to fly in his glider. While doing this story, David showed me a small slip of paper with all the original materials, 1930 costs, totaling \$67.00



THE GLIDER DAVID BUILT IN 1930  
NOTE THE 1926 CHEVY IN BACKGROUND

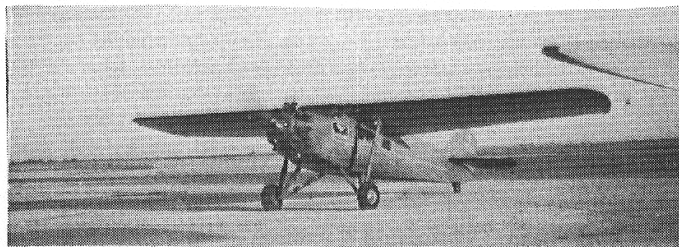


David was a very industrious young man, he did many things well. He was known as the boy who did everything. This has done him well most of his life. Even today his yard is filled with boats, ULTRA Vans, cars, hang gliders, Cessna 310 parts etc. The man never quits and today he's 72.

This young kid, using the high school woodshop, became the competition of a vendor in town. The vendor complained and because of this he could no longer use the high school wood shop. A merchant who was impressed with Davids industriousness, lent him the money to buy a new machine. This gave David the opportunity to open his own woodworking shop. "Dave's Woodwork Shop" just off Main Street in Blackwell.

David graduated from high school in 1932. In 1933 he and a friend went to the Worlds Fair in Chicago. Being resourceful, they made the entire trip in the 1926 Chevrolet for \$25.00 apiece. Gas, food, lodging, gate fees and rebuilding a battery included. This was Davids first big trip away from home on his own.

Being familiar with flying and airplanes, David started doing repairs on airplanes. Usually when a wood spar needed repair, it would have to be removed from the aircraft and sent to the factory and then re-installed. David could make spar repairs on the aircraft. This saved the owners time and money.



THE CESSNA J67 HE GOT HIS PILOTS LICENSE IN IN 1937

He kept the shop during the early 30's when the depression was at it's worst. During this time, David was dating his future wife, Lucille, and they were married in 1935.

In early 1936, he and Lucille moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. He worked at about five different jobs. Remember this is still the depression and jobs were hard to find, but David found them. His best experience was working for Spartin Aircraft. He built maplewood form blocks for the tail structure and door frame of the new Spartin Executive airplane. These were compound curves he was working on.

In late 1936, David and Lucille moved to Wichita, Kansas. Lucille was originally from this area so it was like coming home for her. Dave got a job at the Stearman Airplane Company. He worked in the experimental department using his woodworking talents.

During this time, David got his pilot license #38268. He used a 1930 J67 Cessna. Only a few of these aircraft were built and were outdated by 1937. David got this Cessna and got a good deal on it. With his commercial pilots license he started giving rides for hire out at the Wichita airport. He was moonlighting for he still had the job at Stearman.

In 1938, he acquired a stagger-wing Beechcraft. This happened because a friend introduced him to Walter Beech. It seems that a customer did not take delivery of this aircraft, (this was the 35th one produced). Beech asked David what made him think he could fly a stagger-wing, to which David replied, "What makes you think I can't". With not much money down and a good payment schedule, David went into the Charter business

full time. It took alot of gumption to get into a shaky aviation business at this time. Lucille had her doubts, but David made it by working long hours and using lots of energy. Lucille said the children (Patty born in 1936 and David in 1938), learned to walk by holding onto the fence at the airport.

"David Petersons Charter Service" was started in June 1938. He did alot of flying during these years. Walter Beech was very good to him, sending lots of business his way. Later David acquired a Cessna Air Master to his fleet. In 1939 he got his instrument rating in a Culver Cadet aircraft. Not too many pilots had their instrument rating in 1939, usually only airline pilots.

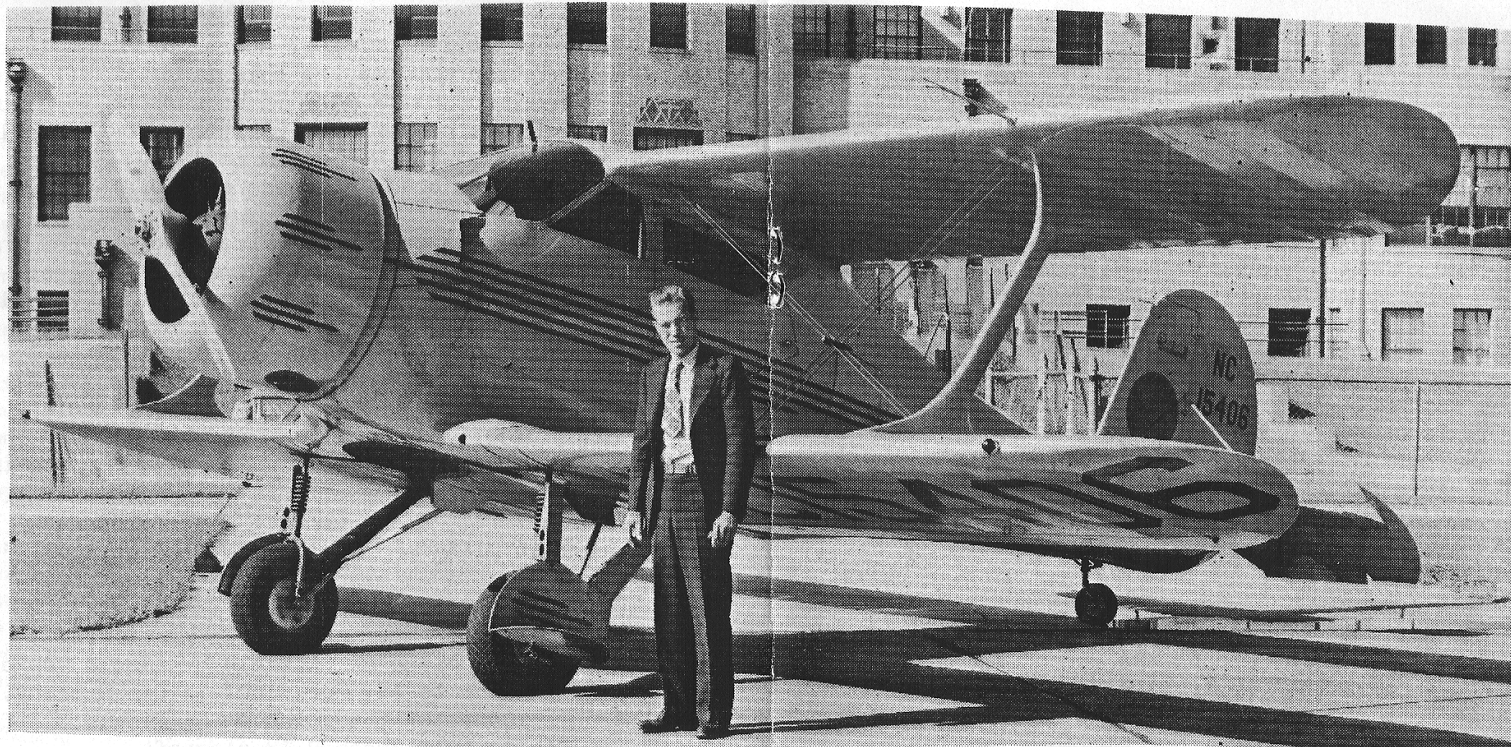
When WW 2 came, the government took his aircraft for the war effort. David went to work for Boeing Aircraft in Wichita. There he was given full charge of the final assembly of the B-29 Superfortress. He was with Boeing until 1944.

Then the story picks up with him getting a job as the first pilot to fly for Sinclair Oil Company. (The Fore-runner of the Atlantic Richfield Oil Co.) He was flying twin Beech D-18 aircraft.

I quote from the book "Power to Fly", by Devon Francis, published by the Richfield Co in 1986.

"Finding a qualified pilot during wartime was no easy task. But Connelley (Sinclair President), remembered flying with an expert Wichita charter pilot who was available. His name was Dave Peterson. Peterson had an unusual history. When the government commandeered his taxi-service planes at the beginning of the war, he went to work for Boeing's Wichita division. There, he oversaw the production of the B-29 Superfortress.

The independent Peterson insisted on test-flying planes as they came off the production line. He even took three months to fly B-17 Flying Fortresses to get four-engine experience. But when the time



PETERSON STANDING PROUDLY IN FRONT OF THE  
STAGGERWING BEECHCRAFT AT THE WICHITA AIRPORT  
IN 1938

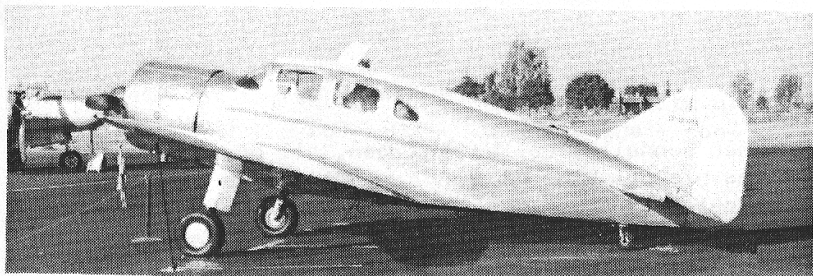
came for the test flights, he tangled with new personnel who knew little of the plane's construction.

Although he had spent two years helping construct the plane, it seemed nobody would listen to him. Peterson left the job and went to work for Beech as a troubleshooter. There, he improved the company's propeller design, incorporating a feathering feature..

When Connelley called Peterson, all he asked about was his drinking habits. Connelley had a pathological fear of pilots who mixed drinking and flying. When Peterson confessed he was a teetotaler, Connelley hired him on the spot."

After the war, while still flying with the Sinclair Oil Co., David started another Air Charter Service in Tulsa. Rent-A-Plane (sound like Hertz?), He had people manage the company for him. At one time he had 10 Beechcraft Bonanzas( a single engine 4 place aircraft) on the line. This business was doing quite well, but he was spending so much time there that in 1955 Sinclair asked him to do one or the other. He sold the business. It was the experience he had with the Beechcraft Bonanzas that gave him the idea for the SuperV. This was a Bonanza airplane built with two engines.

He went to Beech craft with his idea and they said it couldn't be done. That was music to Perterson's ears. So in 1956, he took a leave of absence from Sinclair Oil Co., to start work on the SuperV project. He upped the gross weight 600 pounds. By reworking the engines he achieved an engine nacelle that was only 14 inches thick. This meant less drag and more "GO" for the aircraft. After Beechcraft saw what David had done, they went ahead and developed the Beech Baron along the same lines. So if it hadn't been for David, there might never have been a twin Beech Baron. This entire project got him into working (hands on) with aluminum. Learning how stresses and structures worked, (and didn't work). He finally got the project certified by the C.A.A.



THE SPARTAN EXECUTIVE AIRCRAFT THAT DAVID WORKED ON IN 1936

(today the F.A.A.). He did a few conversions and sold them to buyers. It was this project that brought him and his family to the Oakland Airport in California.

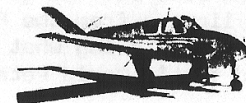
In 1957, he formally left Sinclair after serving as their chief pilot.

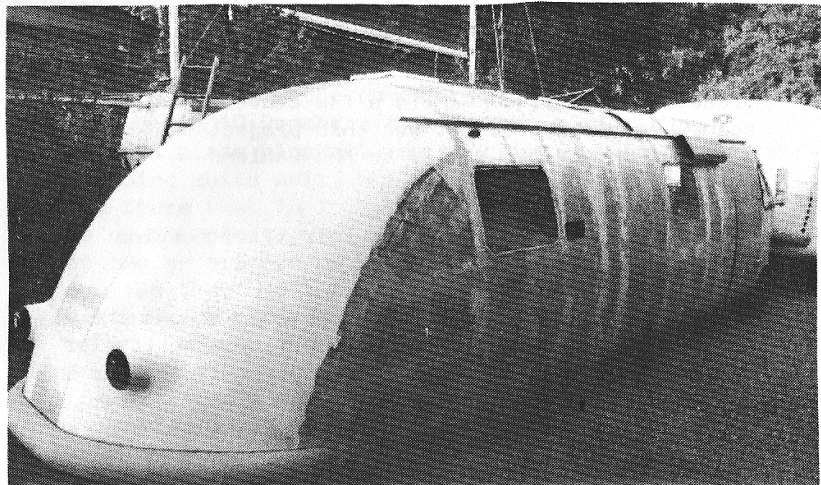
While he was doing the Super V project, he got the idea for the ULTRA Van. Pulling his Spartan trailer into Mexico in 1959, the thought "wouldn't it be great to put the engine in the trailer and leave the car at home?" Had the Oldsmobile Toronado been around in 1960, he would have done just that with the front wheel drive engine. (But it wasn't) He was fascinated with the Corvair power plant so he built a complete new structure around this concept. Using his unique ability to work things out on his own. The project was completed in 1961. For a more complete story on this, see the CURSA Communique of April 1980 (Vol 2, Num. 8)

#### BACKGROUND

All engineering and production rights of the "Super-V" Bonanza conversion project, initiated a few years ago by David Peterson of Tulsa, Oklahoma, have been taken over by Oakland Airmotive at Oakland, California. Peterson has joined Oakland Airmotive with the project.

An improved version of the Super-V prototype is now undergoing the last stages of C.A.A. certification, and it is expected that an approved conversion will be available to Bonanza owners early in 1959.





A BACK VIEW OF THE 700 SERIES ULTRA VAN IN DAVIDS BACKYARD. NOTE 601 ULTRA VAN IN FRONT OF IT WITH A SAIL BOAT BEHIND IT

David's long experience in working with his hands has done him well. He still feels that anyone can do what he can if they are willing to work. He says his secret is energy. Just keep using it and keep going. I might add that he has a lot of ability to go along with it. He doesn't get caught in conventional thinking and approaches. This has gotten him into trouble at times. It also has given him insight to do such projects as the Super V and the ULTRA Van. He has a lot of personal integrity and stays with it. Good old fashion values.

Today David can be found working on the new Chevette side mounted motor home #700, (see Whales on Wheels, Vo 3, No. 3 summer 1984), his twin Cessna 310, or busy with his computer. Just two years ago at the age of 69, he went out and got his aircraft and power plant license from the F.A.A. At retirement age, he was doing what 20 year olds were doing. And that's David Peterson!

If you would like to meet this man, come to the Watsonville Rally at the Santa Cruz County Fair Grounds July 24th-27th, or the National Rally in Fredericksburg, Texas from October 5th-12th. (Ladybird Johnson Municipal Park).

David should be driving the new 700 series Chevette powered unit to Texas. Wouldn't that be fun to see?



DAVID PAINTING THE NACELLES OF HIS CESSNA 310 IN HIS BACK YARD. NOTE ULTRA VANS BEHIND HIM



"Jim Craig's Corner"

# Corvair

Spoken Here

Jim Craig #232



Note: Editor

Change my coach #232 to #65

Oh Ha! did you note the change in my coach number noted above? Reason for change? To make a long story short, I am selling #232, and #206 which I bought last year is actually ULTRA Van #65, which was originally owned by a charter member of the ULTRA Van Motor Coach Club. I am in the process of changing it back to #65 thru DMV. Hopefully I will have it ready for the road late this year.

Yes it is different than the 200 series coaches, will try to get some pictures printed for you in the next newsletter.

Are you also a member of the other Ultra Van Club? The "Ultra Van Motor Coach Club, Inc.?" If not I encourage you to join. We have alot of fun and fellowship and some rip roaring tech sessions. Write Mr. Louis Griggs, Club (Ultra Van) Treasurer. 626 Brookfield Ave, Cumberland, Md. 21502. Send \$10.00 or ask for an application and he will sign you up.

# Classified

#340 - Ultra Van. 110 Engine, 4-sp trans., low miles on engine rebuild. Excellent condition inside and out. Air suspension, White interior, LEVELOR blinds, Fac. Air. cond., Radial tires, Paint in good condition. \$9,000 OBO. Norman Wareberg (818)887-2105

#440 - 1969 Ultra Van-140 HP, 6 Cyl. Corvair Engine. Very good condition. Asking \$7,000. Evelyn Shepherd, 7260 S.E. Tenino St. Portland, Or. 97206 PH: (503) 775-4469

#455 - 1969 Ultra Coach - 110 Corvair Engine & Trans., recently rebuilt with guarantee. Contact "The Engraver", P. O. Box 533, Chester Springs, Pa. 19425 or call (215) 827-7524. Also # 547. (Only ONE for sale - either 110 or V-8 model).

#346 - 1968 Ultra Coach, 4-speed Trans. Recent overhaul, new tires, brakes, shocks, front springs, rear wheel bearing packed, forced air heat. \$7,500. Patrick P. Coxsey. PH: (805) 736-6064

#356 - 1968 Ultra Van. 29,000 Miles, 110 Corvair engine, Auto. trans. Ed Grubb, 2704 Fig St., Tampa, Fl. 33609. PH: (813) 876-4988. 9 P.M. E.D.T.

#232 - Ultra Van. 110 engine, Auto. Trans., Mag. Style wheels, Radial tires, New rug, Cherrywood interior, Front steering bearings repl. and improvements done. All glass good, Paint good cond, Trans & engine coolers, New large window installed w/LEVELOR blind in rear, Extra rear brake lights. Ready to travel. \$7,995 OBO. Jim Craig (619) 571-3493