

# Motorglider

# Shopping

by John A. Heitz

## THINGS TO DO TODAY

- ☒ What Type Of Motorglider
- ☒ Technical Information
- ☒ Talk To An Owner
- ☒ Questions About Maintenance

At the age of 42, I found myself winding down on the 12-hour, 6 and 7 day a week workload and started searching for something else to do with my life besides work. A friend of mine suggested I needed a hobby. Hunting and fishing were out and so was bowling and playing golf. But, I had always wanted to fly and I decided this might be the answer to my hobby problems. I admired the beauty and grace of soaring, but living in Springfield, Missouri was a long way from any glider activity.

Then I heard of a guy named Steve Allen, who was starting a glider operation outside Springfield. I called him and

said I wanted to be his first customer.

Steve is a remarkable person with a background in ultra lights and hang gliders. He loved soaring. I flew with Steve some 50 times over a 3 month period. I enjoyed flying with him, but something was lacking. We always had to stay within sight of the airport and I had the desire to range out and go somewhere.

Thinking maybe I should be a power pilot, I started taking power lesson and within a period of two months, I had

my license. However, something was also lacking there. I liked the advantage of being able to travel but found that I didn't have that many places to go and flying around a small town at 110 knots was no fun. I needed something in between.

Although I had never seen a motorglider, I felt this might be the answer. I knew there weren't any close to Springfield to rent, so if I wanted one I'd have to buy it. Calling the motorglider ads in *Soaring* magazine and ask-

ing questions, I was surprised that everyone I talked to (whether I was interested in their aircraft or not), was very nice and bent over backwards to help.

One of my first calls was to Chris Spangenberg in Los Angeles. Chris had a Sportavia for sale. What a nice person! He spent a lot of time with me on the phone answering my questions about motorgliders. I told him I wanted a two-place, side-by-side and he suggested a Grob.

My next call was to Grob headquar-

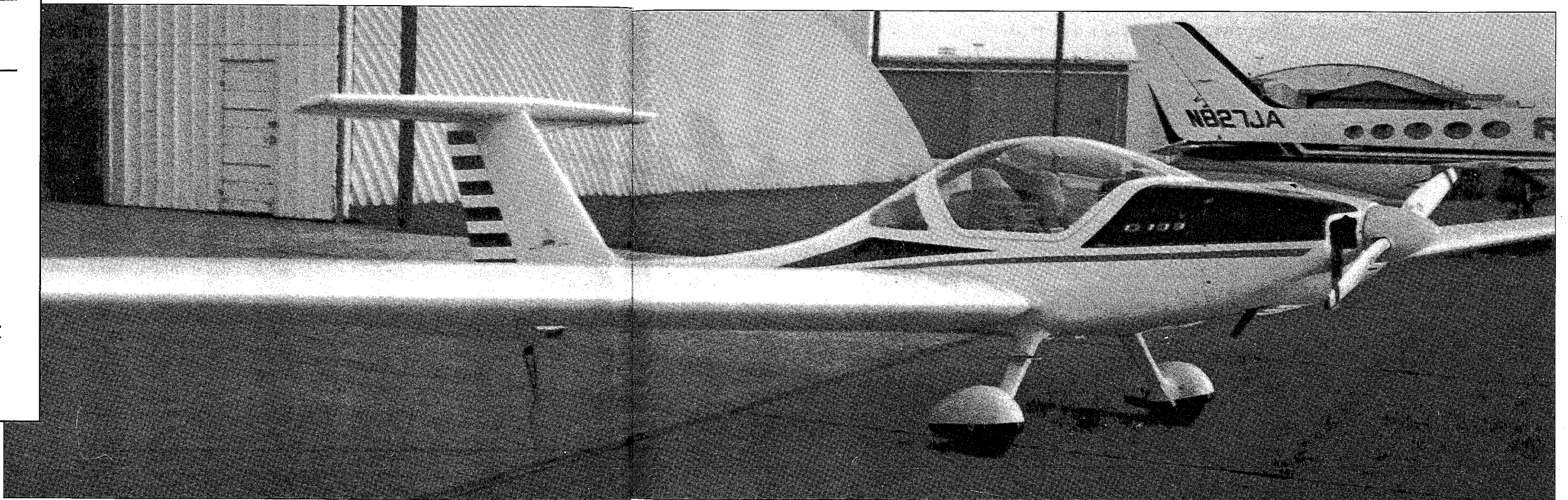
ters in Blufon, Ohio. I spoke to Mike Shade, who filled in all the blanks and told me all about the Grob motorgliders. I couldn't ask for better help than those guys.

Wanting to find out about the engine, I called Jerry Treager with Limbach in Oklahoma. He told me about the engine and maintenance.

Now, I had the technical information, but still needed to speak to an owner. I called Pete Williams in Phoenix, who had just started a motorglider newsletter.

He too was very helpful, sending me a list of motorglider owners throughout the U.S. I spotted Robert Sedgeley in Maine on the list. He had a Grob and I gave him a call. Explaining to him that I enjoyed soaring, but also wanted mobility, he said I wouldn't be disappointed in the Grob 109 and that it should do everything I wanted it to do and more.

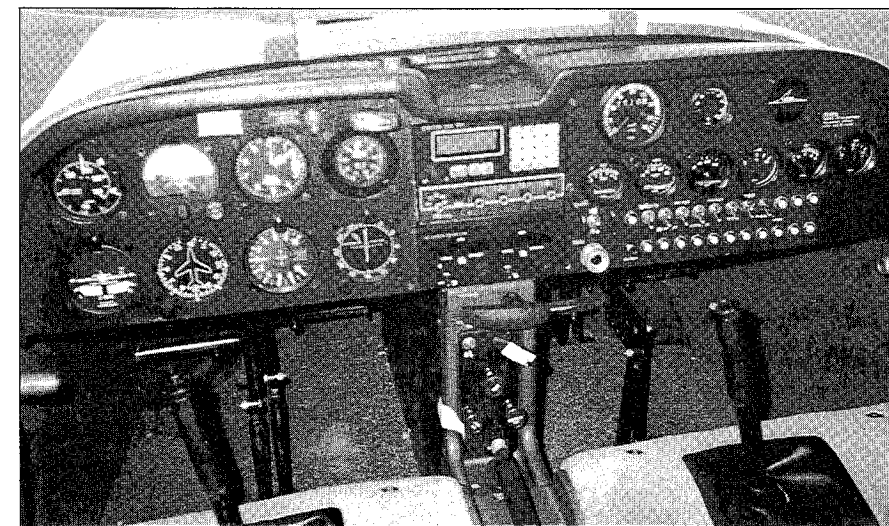
By this time, without ever seeing any motorglider, I felt I wanted a Grob 109. Another call back to Mike Shade located







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one in Chicago. I called the owner and he confirmed that he would sell (he wanted something faster).

Now the problem became getting the plane to Springfield and becoming trained. This was really hard. It seemed no one knew what it took to get my rating. Everyone gave a different story of what the FAA wanted. How was I to find a CFI-G with Grob experience living anywhere around Springfield, or anywhere else in the U.S.?

I must have made at least 50 calls trying to find someone. Just when it looked like my dreams were out the window, Ken Jilek, the seller pitched in. He located a retired engineer in Dallas, Texas who was a CFI-G with over 200 hours in the Grob.

What luck! He gave me the name of Bob McNeil and I called to see if he was interested in training me. He jumped at the chance. He said he could be in Springfield whenever I wanted him.

Now, that took care of one problem, but presented another. Who would give me my checkride? Again, Ken Jilek went to work and found an airline pilot living outside Kansas City, who was a motorglider designee.

I called Willard VanWormer and he said he'd be happy to fly to Springfield

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and check me out. Willard's credentials read like the Who's Who of Flying.

Everything was now falling in place. All I needed was for Ken to fly the plane to Springfield. Ken was trusting of me and delivered the aircraft sight unseen. It was everything he and Mike Shade said it would be. What a beautiful aircraft — complete with Loran, radios, and all the gauges and instruments needed for cross country. As soon as I saw the plane, I knew it was what I wanted.

I bought the plane on Friday and Bob McNeil was in Springfield on Sunday to show me how to fly for the first time. As soon as it left the ground, I knew I had made the right decision. It had it all. Bob and I went to 5000 feet agl turned off the motor and quietly floated for 20 minutes down to 3000 feet and a restart. I now knew I had a hobby. The only thing lacking was mastering the tail dragger.

Between Bob and Willard VanWormer, I got the needed training to master landing. Not only did I find a hobby, but I also met a lot of very nice people along the way. I'm not used to people bending over backwards to help. Soaring is a beautiful sport, but what really makes soaring beautiful is the people. I look forward not only to flying my motorglider, but also meeting more super people. ■

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