

Tom Zeederberg and the First Home-built

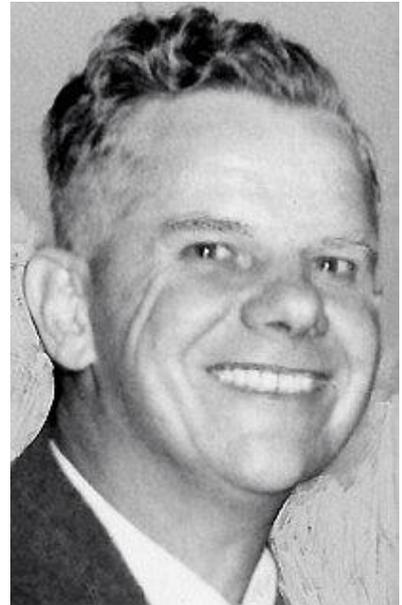
By Brian Zeederberg, May 2013

I was recently going through some family memorabilia, and came across this article from the Star on my dad's (Thomas E Zeederberg) home-built aircraft from 1937. My dad learned to fly during a world trip at Heights Town, New Jersey, USA in 1936 and from what I can remember he got involved with this little home built after he returned from the world travels.

The following information I will give to you from memory from what my dad told me about this aircraft many decades ago.

These 2 aircraft were built by a fellow whose surname was Vine and he lived out at Krugersdorp. The aircraft was totally home-built and Mr Vine used to spend some time in the Koppies at the back of Krugersdorp, studying the flight performance of vultures and eagles and it was said that he would shoot down the odd large bird with a .22 rifle and then dissect the wing and study the wing's curvature etc.

Tom Zeederberg in the 1930s



Maybe some other sources can throw some further light on the construction, but I am aware that Tom was involved in part of its manufacture, but to what extent I am not totally sure.

The aircraft was totally wooden and the fuselage was moulded plywood and finished at the tail cone in a cylindrical pattern almost similar to the bottom end of an ice cream cone.

Power was from an ABC motorcycle engine and there were a couple of different hand carved propellers that they experimented with for better climb or better cross country speed.



ZS-AEV Altis V3 Home-built

A slim fuel tank was situated at the bottom of the pilot seat with a small football pump to pump sufficient fuel through to the engine as the carburettor was higher than the fuel tank in normal flight. Too much pumping caused the carburettor to flood and stop the engine, and too little pressure caused the carb to starve and stop the engine!

The aircraft had a peculiar wing design in that the centre of lift moved with any large increase in airspeed, so that if one put the aircraft into a shallow dive and the airspeed build up, the aircraft would climb automatically although the pilot had the control stick in the fully forward position!

Tom said the stall characteristics were quite scary and erratic and one had to have all your wits about you for any flying whatsoever.

Flight information was passed by word of mouth from one pilot to the next and I believe the aircraft had somewhat of a reputation and was not for the fainthearted at all!

Newspaper cutting from The Star 15 February 1967



Home-building of aeroplanes is not a recent innovation, as is shown by the writer of the accompanying letter. He built this wooden aircraft, with a motor-cycle engine, 30 years ago, and it spent more than 200 hours in the air before war brought a general ban on private flying.

Aircraft built 30 years ago

To the Editor of The Star

SIR.—The photograph in The Star on February 9 of the latest home-built aeroplane prompts me to send this photograph of my home-built aircraft of 30 years ago—ZS-AEO.

I think it compares very favourably both in design and appearance with that illustrated in The Star.

My aeroplane was built entirely of wood and was fitted with a two-cylinder motorcycle engine of very doubtful reliability. Petrol was kept under pressure in a four-gallon container under the pilot's seat, and a modified football pump was

used to keep the fuel at correct pressure.

The aeroplane was registered in the experimental category, so needed no certificate of airworthiness.

Over 200 hours were logged in the air and only the general ban on private flying, imposed at the outbreak of the Second World War, put an end to its really adventurous flying.

T. E. ZEEDERBERG.

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ZS-ADN Altis V1 home-built Registered December 1932 to SV Vine. Crashed Baragwanath 6 January 1933

ZS-AEO Altis V2 home-built Registered December 1933

ZS-AEV Altis V3 Home-built Registered August 1934

Above aircraft information comes from Air-Britain <http://www.ab-ix.co.uk/zs-aaa.pdf>