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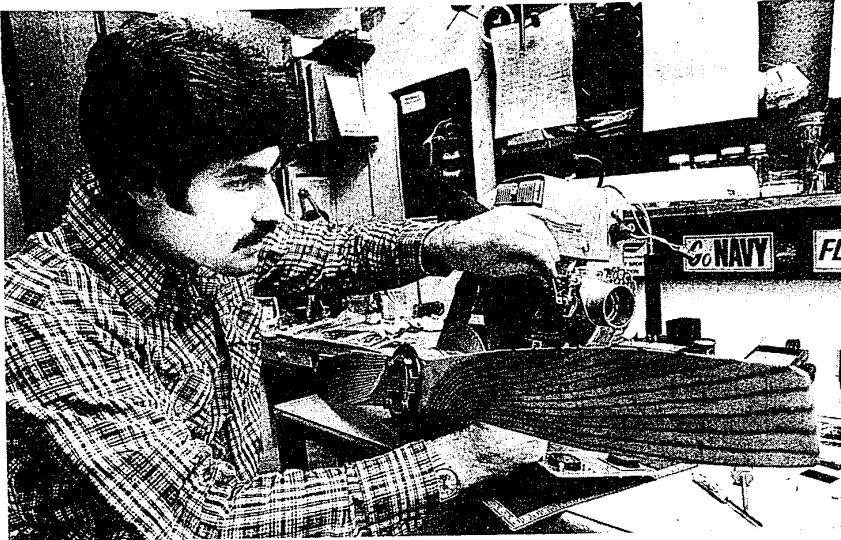
Farmington, Michigan

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Move over Orville: Local pilot builds a plane



Farmington pilot Pat Quain makes some minor adjustments on the engine which will help him to soar to 2,000 feet in a homemade aircraft when the weather improves. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)†

By MARY GNIEWEK

Like a lot of other kids, Patrick Quain grew up with a fascination with airplanes.

But Quain, a 24-year-old dental student who lives in Farmington, has gone a step further than many aviation enthusiasts. In the tradition of Orville and Wilbur Wright, he has had the distinction of piloting a plane he built himself.

Quain built his ultra-light Easy Riser last summer for about the cost of a motorcycle. The open-cockpit aircraft weighs 125 pounds and is powered by a 10 horsepower Chrysler Westbend engine, the kind manufactured for go-carts.

The sleek seven foot body and 30-foot wings are made entirely of aluminum. "Because it's so light, one limitation is that you're at the mercy of the weather," he said.

"Usually early morning or evening is the best time to fly because there's the least wind."

As soon as winter melts into spring, Quain plans to unpack his plane, which is stored in a giant wood box in his garage on State Street, and head for Spencer Field in Wixom.

The plane was transported in the box atop Quain's Vega from the upper peninsula last August. It can be dismantled in just over an hour and reconstructed in three.

THE FIRST launching site for Quain's Easy Riser was Schoolcraft County Airport near Manistique and his family's summer cottage.

Strapped into an adjustable harness

'I want to build planes for the rest of my life. I enjoy flying so much. It's quite a thrill, there's nothing around you.'

— Pilot Patrick Quain

which he claims is as comfortable as an easy chair, Quain says he taxied three or four days on the ground before he took the plane up for its first test run.

"I began at a couple of hundred feet," he recalled. "But I've had it up to 2,000 feet."

The plane can hold a person weighing up to 200 pounds.

"Fore and aft are controlled by body weight," Quain explained. "You lean forward for a descent and backward to go upward."

Wing-tip rudders act as drag brakes and put the plane into coordinated turns. Average cruise speed is 35 miles an hour and Quain says he can land within the space of a baseball diamond.

Because the gas tank can store just a gallon of fuel, an hour is the maximum flight time possible.

"Once, after being up for almost an hour, I ran out of gas. But I was over the airport and was able to glide it down."

Quain got his pilot's license in 1975 and has flown single engine Cessna's. Now he's hooked on ultra-lights.

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County may leave SEMTA over subway plan

By MARY GNIEWEK

Oakland County Commissioner John McDonald, R-Farmington Hills, doesn't think Detroit should be denied a subway system.

But he doesn't think Farmington or other suburban communities should suffer because of it, either.

McDonald, who is one of 27 members on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, said the group is considering withdrawal from the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

The group raised a collective criticism last week of the SEMTA board's recently approved \$2 billion subway system that would run along Woodward from Jefferson to Ten Mile.

Preliminary engineering of the so-called XL Plan may begin soon, according to a SEMTA spokesperson.

Some Oakland County commissioners believe the plan would exhaust all federal transportation grants, leaving no money for the purchase of new buses or terminals in other parts of the seven county SEMTA region.

"The feelings are so strong at this

point in time that nothing would surprise me," said McDonald, when asked if the county would withdraw.

"The county executive feels we could go it along, run our own transportation system with federal funds channeled directly to Oakland County."

WITHDRAWAL FROM SEMTA would require two-thirds support from the board of commissioners. McDonald is not prepared to support such a measure yet.

"There are still a lot of unanswered questions, like how much money we'd

receive. I don't think anything should be done in haste," he said.

McDonald recently drafted letters to the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils asking for recommendations. The Farmington City Council at its Jan. 21 meeting drafted McDonald a response stating it doesn't support withdrawal, but agreeing that a mass transit plan is not in the best interest of Farmington.

"I hope I'm not provincial enough to think Detroit shouldn't get any money. It should," McDonald said. "But it's so expensive a system that outlying areas

won't get their fair share. Still, I'm not prepared to withdraw."

With similar rumblings heard in Macomb County, the impact of two major counties withdrawing from SEMTA would defeat the whole purpose of regional transportation planning, according to McDonald.

"It would fragmentize the whole plan which wouldn't be good," he said. "It wouldn't have continuity. Oakland would go one way, Macomb another way."

Currently, SEMTA provides Farmington and Farmington Hills with two

"park and ride" routes to downtown Detroit. One leaves from the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus and one departs from Grand River and Halsted.

Another route originates in West Bloomfield and winds through Farmington Hills to Middlebelt and Thirteen Mile, then east on Thirteen Mile through the northern suburbs, down Woodward to the Renaissance Center.

Local service from Farmington to the Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi will be implemented this year during off-peak hours, a SEMTA spokesperson said.

Hills police seek bandit in bank holdup

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Farmington Hills Police are searching for a lone gunman who escaped from the Michigan National Bank, 35100 Grand River, Tuesday morning with \$46,000.

The hold-up occurred at about 9:45 a.m. when four employees were inside the bank, a temporary office located adjacent to Bob Saks Oldsmobile dealership. No customers were inside the bank at the time of the robbery.

According to police, the suspect pulled a gun and ordered the bank manager to open and empty a safe. A bank spokesman said money was taken from the safe and teller areas.

Police said no shots were fired.

The suspect escaped on foot and no vehicle was seen.

He is described by police as a black male in his early 30s, with a medium afro hairstyle, moustache, ear-length sideburns and wore large black frame designer eyeglasses.

The suspect has brown eyes, black hair, a thin build and a medium complexion with some pock marks on his face. He's about 6 feet 1 inch tall.

He was wearing a medium-length leather jacket, a black and green print shirt, and green pants. It was the first bank robbery of the year in Farmington Hills and the first at the Michigan National bank branch, which opened in November 1978.



Farmington Hills police released this photo of the suspect Tuesday afternoon. It was taken by the bank's automatic camera. As the suspect prepares to exit, with his left arm on the door, he clutches an open pouch full of bills in his right hand.

Nuclear crisis plan 'inadequate'

State and county plans to protect the public from serious accidents occurring at Michigan nuclear power plants are inadequate.

That was the word, this week, from state Sen. Doug Ross, D-Oak Park, and state Rep. Mark Clodfelter, D-Flint, who studied the plans as co-chairmen of a joint legislative committee on nuclear energy.

The plans were developed in response to a directive from Gov. William Milliken following the Three Mile Island near-catastrophe in Harrisburg, Pa., last year.

Ross and Clodfelter said a number of federal studies recently have declared that nuclear power plants should not operate in areas where the public cannot be protected from serious nuclear accidents.

agency plans developed in Michigan rely heavily on the counties for preparation and execution.

"These plans handle nuclear emergencies in the same way the state and counties handle other natural disasters," Clodfelter said. "But there are immense differences between the two."

The two legislators said that within a critical 50-mile radius of the state's five plants in Charlevoix, South Haven, Bridgman, Monroe and Midland—the last two still under construction—live more than eight million people who could be endangered by a serious nuclear accident.

There are 30 counties that should have plans to deal with these emergencies," said Ross. "Only three have them. Plans that have been produced ignore the technical, communication and logistical complexity of a nuclear emergency."

"County officials in many cases don't know who would have to be evacuated or where to move them. They don't have the training or equipment to

decontaminate large numbers of people.

"They don't have enough personnel to notify people of the danger."

Ross and Clodfelter found that six different federal agencies, 11 state agencies, and county, local and voluntary organizations all have parts in the plan.

"THERE IS NO assurance that these paper plans won't collapse if they're ever really needed," said Clodfelter. "In fact, there isn't even a safeguard to ensure that the power plant operators will notify state and county officials that an emergency exists in the first place."

Ross charged that the plans were developed without public participation or review.

"They require no public education about a nuclear emergency prior to an actual accident," he said.

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