

DR. ROY WICKER (EAA 4455), who now resides and practices dentistry in Quitman, Georgia, has been a prominent part of the sport aviation scene for the better part of the past two decades. In 1965 he completed a beautiful full scale replica of a World War I Nieuport 24 bis, authentic right down to its castor oil slinging LeRhone rotary engine. The following summer the aircraft was at Rockford and afterwards was put on display in the EAA Air Museum. It remained there until the early 1970s when it was sold to a group starting a "flying circus" operation near Washington, DC.

In 1970 Roy brought a newly and beautifully restored Fleet I to Oshkosh, and in 1975 he was back with an equally impressive Cessna C-34 Airmaster. With such an imposing track record — a new homebuilt or antique restoration emerging from his shop at intervals of approximately 5 years — it was no surprise to see him turn up again this year with yet another superb sportplane. This time it was a 180 horsepower Marquart Charger painted in the colors of a 1930s Navy dive bomber.

The selection of a Navy paint scheme came naturally enough. Roy was a Navy pilot in World War II, flying blimps for a period, then transferring to F6F Hellcats and carrier operations. Like so many EAAers who grew up in the 1930s, however, he has a soft spot in his heart for biplanes — especially military biplanes. Boeing F4Bs, Vought SBU Corsairs (the **biplane** Corsairs), Curtiss SBCs — those were the hot airplanes of his impressionable youth. He made models of them just as today's crop of kiddies glue together F-15s and 16s . . . and you'll see Roy's early impressions echoed in the paint scheme of his Charger. It is based on the colors of the famous Fighting Squadron Six which used Felix the Cat, a popular comic strip character of the day, as its insignia. Fighting Six aircraft, which flew off the car-

rier Saratoga, had white tails and this, combined with the pale gray fuselage, was just a little bland, so Roy perked it up a bit by adding a green tail. The idea was to capture the **spirit** of the old fighter/bomber squadrons rather than to precisely duplicate a particular aircraft's paint scheme, so you authenticity sticklers will just have to grin and bear it.

Roy previously lived in Atlanta and became enthused over the Marquart Charger as a result of exposure to John Matthews' all red beauty. After selling his Airmaster, Roy started work on a Charger, completing wing ribs, spars and ailerons before pulling up stakes and moving to Quitman (just west of Valdosta). Work resumed once he and his family were settled in their new surroundings.

Along the way, Roy found a "reasonable bargain" in a Lycoming O-360-A1G6, so he elected to install it in the Charger — along with a McCauley CFA-76 60 propeller. This engine has the carb on the rear and thus presented some initial weight and balance problems. They were solved, however, by installing the battery under the baggage compartment. It's easier to get to there, though, Roy says, so everything worked out for the best.

A few airframe additions and/or modifications were made — out of personal preference rather than any design faults, Roy is quick to point out. Larger 6:50x8 wheels (instead of the standard 6:00x6) were used because the airplane was to be flown mostly off a grass strip . . . and because Roy had located a good deal on Bonanza Goodyear wheels. The wheels, as you can see in the pictures, are faired to look like the old military jobs of the 30s. Further, the shoulder harness was raised to above shoulder height to avoid spinal compression should the Charger ever stub its toes.





Dr. Roy Wicker, P.O. Box 348, Quitman, GA 31643 in his Fighting Six Marquart Charger.

(Photo Courtesy Roy Wicker)



The Charger at Oshkosh '81 . . . taxiing out for an early morning departure for south Georgia. Note the arrestor hook. (Photo by Jack Cox)

The rigging, Roy says, was perfect from the outset with no subsequent changes necessary. The Charger flies hands-off at 2350 rpm. With the big engine, climb is exceptional and cruise at 2400 rpm is a very respectable 135 mph. "Flying characteristics are very good — no bad habits. Power-on and off stalls are gentle and the wings can be held up with slight rudder manipulation," he states.

N645 weighs 1222 pounds empty and grosses at 1800 pounds. Wing loading is 10.5 pounds. (The Charger's airfoil, incidentally, is a 2412.)

Roy is a traditionalist when it comes to covering. He uses Grade A cotton and butyrate dope.

Like everyone else we've ever encountered who has owned or even flown a Charger, Roy is high in his praise of the design. Ed Marquart, he maintains, has struck a rare balance with the Charger — between good looks, good performance and good flying characteristics. All in all, a sportplane that would be very, very difficult to improve upon.

And, finally, the inevitable question: given the fact that you cranked out a Nieuport 24 bis in 1965, a Fleet 1 in 1970, an Airmaster in '75 and the Charger in '81 . . . what's in store for 1985, Roy?

WICKER'S MARQUART CHARGER

By Jack Cox