Burt Rutan's "Boomerang" Aircraft

Ron Peterka March 2010

The Burt Rutan 'Boomerang' It was July 1990 and I was on a cross-country trip with my son and two grandsons to visit the great Experimental Aviation Association convention in Oshkosh. What a sight! Spread out over five local airports, the main event is held at the Oshkosh Whitman Regional airport. Altogether, approximately 12,000 aircraft of almost any vintage, style and type are there to enjoy the largest air show held in the United States each year. There are literally miles of aircraft lined up in neat rows and grouped generally by type and design.

Of all the amateur built designs at Oshkosh it is a fair bet you will see more flying aircraft designed by Burt Rutan than about any other designer. It seems like hundreds of his Vari-easy and Long-easy alone are on display. But, the single most unusual aircraft Rutan has designed showed up at the1990 Oshkosh. He landed in his brand new "Boomerang". The on-lookers were dumb-founded!

This is one difficult aircraft to describe. It's a twin-engine aircraft with a capacity of five people. Fuel capacity is 170 gallons with a cruise speed of 304 MPH, 75% power, at 22,000 ft altitude. Obviously pressurized, and with a range of 2,100 nautical miles at economy power. It's impressive, but certainly not very strange yet. It is the all-composite airframe, the choice of engines, and the instrumentation that sets it apart from all other current aircraft designs. You see the engines are not matched and one is placed several feet behind its neighboring engine. The wing is shaped kind of like a forward-facing boomerang. One engine is rated 210 HP while the other is at 200 HP. Both are turbo-charged. 300 MPH? One engine is in the nose of the passenger-carrying fuselage and the other is in the nose of a boom-like fuselage.

One main gear is in the passenger fuselage and the other in the second boom. They are not lined up together and one is aft of the other with a nose gear in the passenger fuselage.

There are two horizontal stabilizers with one longer than the other and mounted asymmetrically at the tail.

You access the passenger compartment through a rounded hatch that also serves as the right-hand half of the windshield. All windows are rounded and curved to fit the fuselage surfaces.

When you look inside the cockpit there is an amazing lack of conventional instrumentation with only a few regular dial type instruments. On the instrument panel is a small 'desk-top' and all the navigation and engine displays are contained in a lap top computer that can be programmed for navigating from a home computer. The lap top records numerous flight conditions, power and fuel flow, engine RPM, and other engine parameters are also recorded for later study.

This ain't your grandpas airplane!