

# Aggs build plane

## Bugging out? Try the Aggie Volksplane

By CHERYL CESSNA  
Battalion Reporter

It has a Volkswagon engine, but a Beetle it's not. It's a Volksplane and it's being built by a group of aerospace engineering students on campus.

Vic White, chairman of the Volksplane Committee, said the plane is nearing completion.

"I'd say it's about 60 to 70 per cent done. The major construction is finished. The wings are put together and the fuselage and the tail are built. And we have the engine close to being ready to run."

White, a senior in aerospace engineering, said the Evans VP2 really does owe its name to the VW.

"It's powered by a modified Volkswagon automobile engine. Actually very little modification has been done on it. It's direct drive — there's no kind of gearing between the engine and the propeller."

White said the Volksplane Committee, which is a subcommittee of the student branch of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, is self-supporting.

"The AIAA as a subcommittee finances the plane through student Coke sales. There's the possibility that if we really needed something we couldn't pay for right now we could get funding through the aerospace

department. But as of now it's a student project — student-built and student-funded.

In keeping with this idea, he said, the committee's advisors, Dr. Richard Jenson and Dr. Walter Horn, both assistant professors in aerospace engineering, don't do any of the actual work on the plane.

And the students don't receive credit for their work, he said.

"This isn't a required class. It's all voluntary, on a free-time basis."

But the students must be aerospace engineering majors in order to join the committee, he said.

The plane committee, which now has about 35 members, got its start in 1972, he said.

"They solicited support from the Houston branch of the AIAA and got some donations from them. Then they submitted a paper on the construction of a Volksplane to the Bendix Competition, which is sponsored by the AIAA. They won \$300 for that, then took the money and purchased the plans and started building on it."

White said the plane, located in Room 108 of the Engineering Building, will be about 19 feet long with a wingspan of 27 feet when finished. He said the top speed will be 100 mph, with a cruise speed of 75 mph.

"It's not a high-performance

aircraft," he said. "It's kind of a fly-for-fun, putt-putt type."

Nevertheless, White said, the FAA must make sure the plane is safe.

"When it's finished, it'll be certified with the FAA as an experimental aircraft. But even before we can cover it, it has to be inspected by an FAA inspector. In fact, we had an FAA inspector come by and look at it last year and he said that everything here was in good shape."

White said he isn't sure when the plane will be finished.

"I think the major problem we've had is people working on it and then graduating. And then with the next group of people coming up it's kind of a rediscovery thing."

The plane's future use is still unclear, he said. "They had in mind to use it as a test bed for in-flight experiments, but I really don't know what it'll be used for."

White said the plane will be housed in a school-owned hangar. "The aerospace department has what they call the Flight Dynamics Lab out at the Research Annex where the old Bran Air Base used to be and we have a hangar there."

And who will be the first to fly the finished product?

"When the time comes, we'll find someone to do it, someone who wants to do it. You just don't force anyone to do that."



Photo by Lynn Blanco

Vic White and John Bruce, both seniors, examine the VP2 plane being built with a Volkswagon engine. They and about 35 others are members of the Volksplane Committee, which is building plane.

# FOCUS

## THE BATTALION

Focus is published every Thursday as an entertainment section of *The Battalion*.

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**On the Cover:** An Aggie bicyclist zooms through a pedestrian traffic jam on the Texas A&M campus. More and more people are turning to bicycling as an alternative to the energy shortage. For information on how to buy a used bicycle and to keep it safe once you've got it, see page 3. Photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

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