



»» Book Review

A “must read” for fans of Burt Rutan’s innovative designs

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I receive so many requests to review books these days, I generally pass simply because I have neither the time nor staff to read books. Occasionally, a publisher will just try their luck and ship a hard cover edition to me, hoping it might catch some of Airplanista’s virtual ink.

When that happens, most often I glance the book, set it down and move on to something pressing. So when I opened up the package sent to me by John Wurm of Quayside Publishing Group, I expected yet another book for the pile.

Thankfully, I was wrong this time.

Inside the package was a copy of Dan Linehan’s work entitled *Burt Rutan’s Race to Space; The Magician of Mojave and his Flying Innovations* (Zenith Press, 160 pages). Being a hardcore fan of everything Rutan has done in his stellar and legendary career, this book immediately earned my full attention.

This beautiful work is well-illustrated throughout with page after page of images, drawings, sketches and illustrations, many given to the project “Courtesy of Burt Rutan.” The art compliments Linehan’s words, which tells the story extremely well.

After a great forward by “first commercial astronaut” Mike Melvill that sets the scene eloquently, Linehan starts by telling of Rutan’s boyhood dreams. But it quickly gets right into the history of his designs in chapter 1, explaining in great detail Rutan’s early designs, including VariViggen and the VariEze homebuilt.

Chapter two is equally entertaining, as Linehan takes the reader through the history of some amazing

designs, from the Quickie to the Boomerang.

After telling the Scaled Composites story in full in chapter 3, Linehan goes full-tilt into the space age in chapter 4, talking about SpaceShipOne and White Knight with plenty of backstory on the Ansari X Prize and the ascension of commercial space travel.

And in chapter 5, the author verbally paints a vivid picture of the “next generation” of aviation, describing everything you need to know to understand the concepts, theories and vehicles that are pushing commercial space travel forward. One notable side bar: Linehan asks the question of whether Rutan will be the first designer to offer homebuilt spacecraft. While the inquiry goes unanswered, it does succeed in pushing the reader to imagine the possibilities.

Unless you are a scholar of everything Rutan, I promise there will be many, many surprises in this book. And you will come away from it with a much more profound respect for a man who, in my opinion, is modern aviation’s most innovative aerospace engineer.

The book will be available during AirVenture in the EAA Warehouse throughout the show. It is also available online at www.zenithpress.com.

