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Wondering Where The Future of Aviation Is?

Wonder No More!

Meet Ms. Sabrina Gonzalez Pasterski

by Jim Bildilli

SCHAUMBURG, ILL. – The Illinois Aviation Trades Association (IATA) honored Sabrina Gonzalez Pasterski, a 16-year-old student from Chicago, for her commitment to pursue a career in aviation as well as her accomplishments thus far, during the Illinois Aviation Conference, May 18-19, 2010, at the Chicago/Schaumburg Marriott Hotel. IATA President Andy Priester of Priester Aviation, Wheeling, Illinois, presented Pasterski with an award of recognition.

When other kids her age were still playing with dolls, Sabrina embarked on an adventure that is still ongoing. At the ripe old age of 9, she decided that she wanted to learn how to fly and started taking flying lessons in Canada due to its lower age restrictions. According to her mother, Maria, Sabrina's fascination with aircraft and spaceflight began when she was only 4 years old. Her father, Mark, who is an attorney, an electrical engineer and a pilot, encouraged her to follow her dreams.

Confessing her desire to design spacecraft, her mentors suggested that besides learning to fly, she might want to build an aircraft to gain experience. In 2006, at the age of 12, she purchased a Zenith CH 601XL kit aircraft of her own. She admits it was a little intimidating and confusing at first, but through a network of other builders and the Internet, she began the project.

Within the first month, she assembled an engine from the parts of three others. At that stage, the FAA designated the engine a "Sabrina 0-200A." For the next seven months she constructed the fuselage, wings and tail section. In the subsequent four months, she worked on the interior. During the process of construction, Sabrina became a certified Light Sport Aircraft (LSA) mechanic.

By October 2007, she had essentially completed as much of the aircraft that could be accommodated in her parents' suburban Chicago garage. It was then disassembled and taken to the Aurora Airport where it was painted and reassembled for flight.

In January 2008, with her father at the controls, her Zenith CH 601XL made its maiden flight. Since receiving a valid registration certificate from the FAA, the agency has issued SAIB CE-10-08 in response to several accidents involving the aircraft's structure. Sabrina is currently making the necessary modifications to comply with the findings.

Sabrina graduated from the Illinois Math and Science Academy near Aurora. With perfect attendance and nearly perfect ACT and SAT college entrance examination scores, she applied for admission to her "most favored" institution, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Of course, being one of only 23 women selected



Sabrina Gonzalez Pasterski with the Zenith CH 601XL she built in her parents' garage.

as a semifinalist for the U.S. Physics Team, only added something extra to note on her application. Although she did not turn 16 until June, Sabrina received notification that she had been accepted by MIT for admission this fall.

The recognition of her accomplishments by IATA is well deserved. Considering what she has accomplished so far, it's reasonable to expect that she will be involved in America's efforts to visit Mars, establish a permanent base on the moon or any other goal involving travel by spacecraft. *Way to go Sabrina!!* □



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Presented To

Sabrina Gonzales Pasterski

For her industry achievements including building an aircraft and soloing before her 17th birthday and for her inspirational enthusiasm for general aviation both as a light sport air manufacturer and aviator.

*Illinois Aviation Trades Association
Board of Directors
May 19, 2010*

