



Society for Preservation And Restoration of Skyrangers

SPARS #10, February 2001

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Winter

Well, we've had a warm spell here in Pittsburgh – would you believe 68 degrees in the middle of February? Of course I had to take the afternoon off to fly '395, but the weather's returned to a much more sensible 34 degrees, so I'm safely behind the keyboard again, bringing you the next, sorely overdue issue of SPARS. Of course, not everyone's a weather wimp like me – I got a great note from Mike Megli showing a picture of his Skyranger (above) on skis near Lake Mikchalk. Mike bought 92960 from Harold Miller a few years back, and took it up to Dillingham, in western Alaska. Now, I just *know* he flies it when the temps get below freezing.

Planning Ahead for Warmer Weather

Alex Fodor wants to know if any Skyranger pilots are coming out to Sun and Fun, at Lakeland this April 8-14. He and Sue (and N34115) live about 4.5 miles from Lakeland, and would love to have a barbecue at their hangar. They've got a 4000' runway, so flying out won't be a problem – even *after* you've loaded up on more food than you should have. You can reach Alex and Sue by email at AJSEF@webtv.net, or write to them at : 4805 Southwind Ct., Mulberry FL 33860.

For us northerners, Jeff Spencer has proposed that we try to congregate for Sentimental Journey, the annual Piper Fly-In at Lock Haven on June 20-24. I give it two thumbs up – it's one of the best down-home fly-ins I've been to. It's especially nice being a Skyranger there, since you stand out in a sea of Piper ragwings. Send me email (david.cohn@acm.org) or call/write if you think you can make this one.

A short, and quiet flight

I have to admit that I *have* been flying during the cold weather, and one of my recent flights was a bit shorter and more eventful than I would've liked. Late last fall I developed some magneto problems I couldn't diagnose, and ended up sending the pair of them out for a checkup. By the time I'd gotten them fixed and reinstalled, winter had set in, and I was rusty. Nonetheless, I got a warm December day, dug the hangar out of the snow, and fired '395 up for a *very* thorough preflight.

Full power runup was good, mag drop just right, and all systems were go. So I got clearance from tower and taxied out for a southbound departure. Power in smoothly, good brisk

acceleration, rotate and maintain 67 mph... then, at about 50 feet up, the engine sputtered, coughed and started sounding like it didn't want to pursue aviation as a career. Fortunately, I still had close to a mile of runway ahead of me, so I set it down straight ahead, taxied off, and did some debugging.

Try as I might, I couldn't get it to miss a beat on the ground, so I figured it must've been some residual water, and taxied back for another go. This time I asked for a close-in pattern – just in case. Again, a good takeoff roll, good climbout, and then, at about 250 feet, the sputtering resumed. Full carb heat brought it back, and I figured that, with pattern altitude rapidly approaching, I'd take it around a (close) pattern and do some debugging. I played with airspeed, throttle, mags, mixture, attitude – nothing seemed to affect the engine smoothness except carb heat.

Landed and taxied back to the hangar for a talk with my favorite mechanic. His hypothesis was that the mixture was too lean. We had very dense air that morning (30.32 or so), and the added air pressure of forward motion may have just made the mixture too lean for proper combustion. He agreed to enrich the mixture a touch, and I'd try again a few days later.

I got the chance a few *weeks* later, once the weather got sensible again. Did the full runup, told tower it was going to be a close-in pattern, and started off down the runway. Beautiful acceleration, rapid climb, and at 100 feet the engine did *not* stutter. It just stopped cold. Well, that got my attention, and I dropped the nose, held airspeed, and made my first ever really-truly deadstick landing. Quite nicely, I might add – even rolled off onto the taxiway as tower deadpanned my clearance: "Commonwealth '395 is cleared back to parking... if able."

Once I caught my breath. I confirmed that yes, she'd start right up on the ground, just as before. I taxied back and called my mechanic. "Steve" I said, "guess what – it *isn't* a mixture problem." I explained what had just happened, and he, with no small amount of exasperation told me that he hadn't yet had the chance to adjust the mixture, and what the hell was I doing flying that plane? After a brief discussion on the generally accepted definition of "in a couple of days" I agreed not to take it up again until he'd given me the word.

To wrap up an overly long story, with a bit of mag tweaking and mixture enriching, the problem has disappeared, but it's left me with a question: how to properly set mixture on a Skyranger?

On most engines, I've been taught that the mixture is properly set if, when you pull the mixture to idle cutoff, the engine picks up a few (25 or so) rpm before dying. But the C85-12F on '395 has a Stromberg carburetor, and the Stromberg has an idler jet – it'll run just fine at idle with the mixture full lean. So – how do **you** make sure the mixture is properly set?

Yet Another Skyranger Unearthed

Got a note from Eric Rearwin about a (newly discovered?) Skyranger project. Caveniss M. Allred has a Skyranger that's been living in the garage for the past 43 years. It has no covering, but there's an extra set of wings and gear. Engine has 242 hours on it. For more information, send email to Mr. Allred at Caven1@corecomm.net.

One that's Already Flying

Ken Griffin of Pasco, Washington has been a SPARS member as long as I can remember. After 8 years with Skyranger 90689, he's decided that it's time to put her up for sale. She sounds to be in very nice condition – an October annual, with 650 hours on the C-85, and wings recovered about three years ago. Instruments all original except the radio. Ken's still working out a fair asking price, but if you're interested, send him email at kgriffin@riverviewbaptist.org

And One More Starts the Long Road back to Airworthiness

You should remember Chuck Stottlemeyer (charle@indy.net) from SPARS#9. He'd just finished an astounding 12 year rebuild of a round-engine Great Lakes. He's hoping the relatively simple Skyranger project he picked up will take a little less. Latest progress is as follows:

Officially started on the rebuild this month. Have the fuse stripped, ready for bead blast, doors fit up, lists made, pix taken, etc. The only thing I haven't found, so far, are the brake discs. Wheels were assembled, looked like they came right off the airplane. Hmm. At any rate, rather than put big bux into what I understand are brakes that occasionally shoot you off the runway, I think I'll convert to Clevelands. If I remember correctly, you have Clevelands on your bird. Have any paperwork? Is this a no brainer? Never messed with these kind of brakes before.

Haven't had any luck matching the upholstery. Does someone know where to get the original materials?

I've assured Chuck that converting to Clevelands is indeed a no-brainer. To ease the process, I've digitized and sent him copies of the form 337s I used to for my conversion. Now Eric Rearwin's put them up on the web at the Rearwin Digital Archive, so anyone with a computer, modem and printer can grab them for themselves. Which brings me to my next topic.

The Compleat Skyranger Archive

Over the years, most of us have accumulated a fair amount of documentation on the Skyranger. Old mimeographed copies of

SPARS, advertising brochures, 337s, some blueprints and technical data. Since SPARS has started up, I've found myself photocopying and sending a lot of it out to folks. Talking with other Skyranger owners at Blakesburg, we started wondering if we couldn't just digitize everything and put it on the web. It turns out that Eric Rearwin has already started the job. At the Rearwin Digital Archive <<http://www.rearwin.com/rda.htm>>, he's got a list of STCs, paperwork for the Cleveland brake conversion, copies of the sales brochures – the works. He tells me that he soon expects to have some video footage from Al Barbuto up there. As soon as I get a new scanner hooked up to our computer, I'm going to get to work scanning the old 1970s mimeographed copies of SPARS I have stashed away. Eric requests:

If you have a story or a piece of Rearwin history that you want to share, I'd like to hear about it. Also, if you would be willing to donate anything related to the Rearwin Airplanes legacy, please let me know. I will add it to the Rearwin Digital Archives for all to enjoy.

Send him email – eric@rearwin.com, and check out the archive!

Diana Cream and the Mystery of the Comet

A few weeks ago, I received a letter from the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum in Reading, PA. They appear to be starting work on their Skyranger (N93248, #1753). They asked a few questions I wasn't able to answer myself, so I passed them on to the SPARS email list, and received a lot of responses. First question was on the comet or bullet head on the cowling. I've seen a few different styles, and have no idea what's "original."

Brett Lovett, who's done quite a bit of research along these lines, believes that factory aircraft (at least those from Kansas City) all came with the large comet enclosing the word "Skyranger" in script. Don Veness has sent me a tracing of this form, which I hope to get up on the archives as soon as I manage to get a new scanner hooked into our computer.

According to Brett, some of the later Skyrangers, those that were shipped unassembled, may have had the trim added by the distributor. This is consistent with email from Ed Gallagher reporting that his Skyranger – which he assembled himself in Long Island – came with a different comet (photo below).

The second question the MAAM had was on paint colors, seeking to confirm that Diana Cream was the original "light" color for the wings and trim. Tom Scott reports word from Lana Kurtzer that the original three schemes were maroon, forest green, and a sort of Travelair blue, all with the lighter cream color. He writes:

I don't think that the Diana Cream was the correct color, it's too dark. When you see it on a large surface, it looks more like burnt cream. Sun Valley Ivory was the closest I could come to descriptions given to me by Kurtzer and Tom Chandler.

Gary Danford wrote in too:

I have been recovering the control surfaces on mine this winter and am using "Diana Cream" Stitts # 131. When I was striping a couple of the Domed inspection plates

they were an "Exact" match for the Diana Cream. Now whether or not that was an original color I'm not sure as N92999 has been covered several times.

Brett, who seems to have original bits of everything, had some additional unexpected information:

I have a piece of original fabric with the original maroon and cream colors. It appears that the factory used the Cream color as a base under that Maroon to give it more color, and masked the N-numbers when applying the Maroon. However the trim stripes were evidently not painted until the aircraft was fully assembled. Perhaps of interest also is that the interior fabrics used by Commonwealth had combinations to match the exterior color. a few questions on how to make it authentic.

I'm forwarding all the responses I get – if you have any ideas, opinions or questions you'd like to share with the museum, send email to fpierce@maam.org, or write to Russell Strine, Mid Atlantic Air Museum, 111 Museum Drive, Reading, PA 19605-9407.

That's no Cub - That's my Skyranger! by Ed Gallagher

On November 8th 1952 I flew with a friend to Minot ME to visit a friend who was teaching at the Hebron Academy. The flight up was uneventful, we stayed over night and the plan was to fly home on Sunday. I knew the weather would not be the best, but hoped we could make the 3:25 hour flight back to NJ and beat the weather, as the Skyranger had no IFR instrumentation, with a LF and broadcast AM radio, good transmissions were only 5 miles. So we left Sunday morning hoping to make it back home, but I was worried about the weather - it looked like it was ready to snow any minute. We managed to get to Concord NH at the time, I tried to get

weather in New York via the LF range, as I had made this trip a few times, I knew there was an airport just South of Concord (Hooksett-Manchester, now long gone) and decided to go on.

Just about 10 miles from Hooksett it started to snow, but since I was following the Merrimack River (you know, "IFR"), I knew the location was to my right past the town of Hooksett. By the time I reached the airport the snow was quite heavy, but I did not want to make mistake, so I buzzed the area and confirmed that it really was the airport. I made a go around, and on the downwind leg I could no see out the windscreen; fortunately I could open the side window and look to the side. I also knew from previous flight that there were high-tension wires crossing the river. I turned and a 180 and made my approach and landed, and by the time we tied the plane down there were 4 inches of snow on the ground. We took a cab to Manchester; took a train to Boston, and from there caught another one to New York.

That is only part of the story, I took the train back the next week and attempted to return to Jersey with my Skyranger. After passing Fitchburg I noticed a cloud layer ahead and decided to go over the top and use the LF Range. According to weather in New York it would be OK, but that was not to be, the latest weather showed it had deteriorated. I started to look for a hole, and I did find one South of Springfield MA, went down it and proceeded to the Connecticut River. I was looking for Bowles -Agawam Airport, but the fog was very bad. I made a 180 back to the hole, where I had seen a golf course, and that was it for me. I landed on the Tenth Fairway at the Franconia Golf course without any problems (it was an uphill landing). The Course is in East Longmeadow, MA and is run by the City of Springfield.

I took off next morning with no problems and was home in an hour. But of course, according to the newspaper the first day I arrived in Piper Cub, 2nd day Skyranger and took off in a Piper Cub, and of course you must understand the Piper Cub was very popular in the 50's. I forgot to mention that I spoke to the Springfield Police Chief. He wanted to know if I made par; it was five on the tenth fairway and I had birdied: the Skyranger bounced 4 times.

Hope to see you in Lock Haven!...

SPRINGFIELD, MASS., NOVEMBER 16, 1952

Franconia Turns Airport



Franconia golf course turned into an emergency airport for Ed Gallagher, 28, of Clifton, N. J., yesterday afternoon. En route home from Manchester, N. H., Gallagher ran into thick fog, spotted the Franconia links below him and landed safely on the 10th fairway. He taxied to the clubhouse and greeted the astonished greenskeeper, George Post. Gallagher, posing here with his plane, expects to leave today if the weather is clear. Post said there was little damage to the plane or to the course, and that it was the first time in 23 years since Franconia has been opened that a visitor arrived by air.

Franconia's Sloping Fairway Gives Piper Cub Good Sendoff

New Jersey Pilot Who Made Emergency Landing On Golf Course Reports Safe Arrival

The Clifton, N. J., sports plane pilot, who got lost in Saturday's fog and set his Piper Cu down on Franconia Golf Course's 10th fairway, took off yesterday morning at 11 in clear weather to complete his trip home.

Reports Safe Arrival

Shortly after 1.15 yesterday afternoon, George Post, Franconia greenskeeper who had suddenly been made host to the flier, received a call from Ed Gallagher, 28, of Clifton, N. J., saying that he had arrived safely home without incident.

Gallagher has been a pilot for several years and flown his little plane over a large section of the country.

Last week he flew to Maine and on the return trip was forced down in

Manchester, N. H., by a snow storm. He was resuming his homeward flight Saturday on a leg to Bowles Airport in Agawam when fog forced his landing at the only clear spot in the area—the golf course.

He jockeyed his small craft down on the 10th fairway easily but nearly produced apoplexy among nearby residents and course employees.

Yesterday, with fairly good visibility to assist the takeoff and bystanders to wave him off, Gallagher ran the Piper down the slight grade on the fairway and became airborne.

He circled once over the course, wagged his wings—spectators said—and was last seen flying serenely southward.