



Alex & Sue Fodor's Skyranger
at this year's Sun'Fun BBQ

Society for Preservation And Restoration of Skyrangers

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Sun 'n Fun is Sunny and Funny, I think

It's been way too long, as usual, since I've put out an issue of SPARS, but we need to get coordinated for Oshkosh (gimme a call or send email if you're coming!), and it's almost July!

I missed Sun 'n Fun, but Alex Fodor hosted a BBQ for Skyranger fans/owners at Sun 'n Fun, and as best as I can tell, quite a few showed up. Pat Groover, Marty Miller, Eric Rearwin and Ed Gallagher made it there, at least, and Ed sent me the photo of Alex's Skyranger up there at the top of the page.

Why I do this

People keep asking me why I go to the trouble of putting together a Skyranger newsletter, putting in the time to write it, paying postage and copying costs out of my pocket for nothing but the thanks I get. It does sound a little daft, I admit. But it's not sheer craziness that keeps SPARS going. People do send contributions every now and then to help with the postage, and it's really not that much cost, even when you add things up.

But there's a very important thing that keeps SPARS going, and that's you folks. And you're what keep me going. Those of you who are on the email list already know what I mean – you were witness to “the saga of Pablo's exhaust stacks.” Went something like this:

Last month, my old exhaust system finally gave up the ghost. I poked at a brown spot near the bottom bend, and my finger went right on through. Asked around (using the SPARS email list), and found a place that could build me a new set, so I pulled the stacks off '395 and sent 'em along to Dawley Aviation. When Dawley got them, they freaked – acted like I'd sent them something made out of plutonium (“Tell me again what these things came off of? Are you sure that's a certified airplane?”). Said they could make me a replacement, sure enough, but it would take their top guy 8-12 week\$ to do it. Thumbing through the calendar, those 8-12 weeks covered the Lockhaven, Oshkosh, Blakesburg and Brodhead fly-ins, let alone all those other summer weekends I'd been pining for.

I sent out a panicked email note asking for advice, and within 12 hours, *three* different Skyranger owners offered to send me *their* exhaust system to borrow until my new stacks were ready. I gratefully took Zot Barrazotto up on his offer, and he

UPS'ed them off to me (*Zot – I still owe you postage for those puppies*). Now, only a few days later, '395 is airworthy again.

When I took '395 up on her first flight with the borrowed stacks, I thought a lot about what kind of organization SPARS has become. There's an amazing amount of Skyranger knowledge out there, and an amazing eagerness to help out. You just can't buy that sort of help. Okay, you *can* buy that sort of help, but Cessna calls it a “service program” and charges \$5000 a year for the package. Me? I get it all for a few hours of writing and a handful of stamps every three months. No regrets here!

Lockhaven Rained Out...

It sounded like a really good idea – piggyback a Skyranger gathering onto the fun and always popular “Sentimental Journey” fly in at Lockhaven. Mark Schaden, Bob Tilden, Al Barbuto, Ed Gallagher and I were all going to be there, ready to wow the Piper crowd with an onslaught of Skyrangers from three states. '395 (“Our Lady of Perpetual Maintenance”) was finally airworthy again, sporting Zot's exhaust system, and Lockhaven was beckoning. It would be great fun.

And then it rained. And rained. And rained. Some time around Friday at noon, a fellow with an ark full of animals stopped by asking for directions, but I couldn't quite hear him over all the rain. Finally, Sunday morning, the sun peeked out, but Sentimental Journey was over for another year.

...but July Fly-in in the Works?

Not to be defeated by one of Mother Nature's reminders about who's really boss, we're going to try a fly-in of our own. Tentative plans are for the weekend of July 14-15th, somewhere in central Pennsylvania. That'll be within reach of the New Yorkers, Ohioans, and most importantly, me (hey – ya deal 'em, ya call 'em).

Exact date and location are negotiable – Bob Tilden suggests Dart Airport in Mayville, NY, at the west end of Chataqua Lake. Bob says they have a weekend diner and a warehouse-type museum. “A hotbed of ol' time flyin'.” We can plan on lunchtime, July 14th, leaving the 15th as a rain date. Send email or give me a call at 412-654-3070 if you want to get an opinion in on potential date/time/destination, and make sure you check in with me before heading out, so we make sure we're all going to the same place at the same time.

You can Buy 'em on EBay These Days

Sorry I couldn't get a SPARS out in time to publicise this one, but Karl Walter just auctioned his Skyranger project off on EBay. Don't know any of the details, but the buyer, "mary0612" got an amazing bargain: an almost complete project, minus engine, for \$2600. I've already got as many Skyrangers as I can afford (uh, that would be "one"), but I was tempted to bid on it for the parts alone. It'll probably cost me more than \$2600 just to get a new set of stacks and a new cowling built!

They're Even Giving Them Away

Got this unusual offer in the mail a couple of weeks ago: if there are any takers, please let me know!

From: Herrill Davenport [mailto:Herrill.Davenport@vitesse.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2001 3:59 PM
Subject: Skyranger parts/project

David, SPARS

The company I work for is Vitesse Semiconductor, We use a hanger on the Longmont Colorado(2V2) airport, for storing excess stuff. To use a hangar on the airport we need to have an airplane or airplane parts in the hangar to use it. We were using a moving truck to haul stuff around this one time, through an arrangement with our facilities person had. This time they told him to take the truck, but we would have to do something with this airplane. This airplane I believe to be a Skyranger fuselage, a left and right wing, a motor mount, and seat cushion.

The "N number" and data plate are not on these parts. I believe what happened is an insurance company totaled the airplane after an accident, A hard landing by the way the gear attach points look.

My reason for contacting you is we are moving to a larger building and will be getting out of the hanger all together. I would like to see if you or any one in the SPARS would have a need or desire for these parts of a Skyranger. I'm not looking to get any money for this, If I do it will go to The Wings Over The Rockies Air Space Museum, located on the old Lowery Airforce Base.

I belong to National AAA, and the Colorado Chapter, and would like to find a good home for this Skyranger. I don't have room to store this after July. Any leads would be appreciated.

You can contact me at work or home.
Home phone is 303-460-7789,
email herrill@ecentral.com



Skyranger T-Shirts

Wayne Forshey has printed up a few Skyranger t-shirts that I think are just fantastic. It's only practical to print them up in batches, though, so we need to see if there's sufficient interest. I've graciously modeled the front and back of the shirt for this issue. Wayne says that in a batch of two dozen, we could get them for \$15/each. As always, let me know if you're interested, and how many you'd like. I'll keep a tally, and if we've got enough folks on board, I'll let you know where to send the money.



Scratchin' the Itch

by Bob Tilden (from www.bobtilden.com)

It has been a long time since I went anywhere in my plane. Weedsport, Middlesex, Avoca, and the others are great places for a quick jaunt and a meal with friends, but sometimes you just have to stretch out and find some new scenery. Local flying is my meat- and- potatoes reason for owning an airplane, but the occasional trip is the slice of warm apple pie.

Easter Sunday was an excellent day for one of those longer trips. The winds were light and the sun was subdued as Saturday's high pressure area moved off in favor of Monday's low pressure weathermaker. Visibility was excellent, the air was smooth, and as it turned out the change of the weather gave me a tailwind in both directions.

I went on a trip that I have contemplated for that last two summers, back to the airport where I bought my plane. It is about a two hour flight each way, but I knew that it would take most all day to do it right. You have to stop and talk, and you have to leave room for the inevitable side trips. Most of all, you have to have time to wander around and check out sights that pique your curiosity.

I left Dundee and followed the valleys, through Odessa and down Cayuta Creek all the way to Sayre, where I joined up with the Susquehanna River. I followed the river's gentle bends around the hills to the broad Wyoming Valley, an interesting piece of geology that is more commonly known as Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. I landed for breakfast at the Wyoming Valley Airport.

This is the Valley's "old" airport, laying right along the river just north of Wilkes - Barre. The broad wings of the first- generation airliners once cast their shadows here, but air commerce shifted to the present- day airport when it opened in the mid- forties. The old hangar and terminal building is well- kept and a pleasure to view. It made a great background for a picture of my mid- forties airplane.

From Wilkes - Barre I flew south, paralleling I- 476 until I picked up the Lehigh River where I-80 crosses over it. I don't know that I had ever heard of the Lehigh before, but I was impressed with the twisting course that it had carved through the ridges. As a work of nature it is more impressive than Pine Creek's "Pennsylvania Grand Canyon" but I also had to admire the determination it took to build and maintain two railroads through such a chasm. Few sights can offer stronger testimony to the importance of rail transportation at the turn of the last century.

The Lehigh fights its final battle with the hills where it passes through a dramatic cut in the long ridge that is Blue Mountain, north of Allentown. Passing over the gap and out of the mountains, I soon located the Flying M Airport amidst the fertile flatlands. I circled the field and landed amidst the quiet countrys ide, parking in the exact spot where I had first laid eyes on my plane.

A few local pilots were there, and they recognized the plane right away. We talked of the same nothingness that non- pilots recognize as "airplane talk", but they also told me that my plane had spent a lot of time at the Beltzville airport. It hadn't been my plan, but I decided to stop there on my way home.

Beltzville Airport, just south of Beltzville Lake is Dave Beltz's airport. Dave is one of General Aviation's unsung saints, a long- time pilot and mechanic who's sons and grandsons are also pilots and mechanics. Beltzville is one of aviation's secret airports, tucked away in the hills with an unimpressive collection of buildings near the end of a short and sloping runway, but lots of people go there and have fun.

I found Dave working with a group of glider pilots as they were setting up for their first flights of the season. He had a big smile and a handshake for me, and he said that he recognized my airplane just from its unusual sound as it passed overhead. Before he even looked up, he knew that one of his birds had come home.

I stayed for a little bit, admiring the sight of a busy little airport, but I had to start for home. I had seen new things and been to new places, and I couldn't help but think of still more places to go. Flying is like poison ivy; the more you scratch it, the more it itches. Since I couldn't make any more detours on my way back to Dundee, I succumbed to the temptation of a "canoe ride" up the Susquehanna.

The river meanders back and forth between Towanda and Tunkhannock. Instead of flying in a straight line half a mile above it, I dropped down to a few hundred feet and followed every one of its bends. I thought of the early settlers polling upriver in rafts 200 years ago, and of steam locomotives pulling trains alongside the river 100 years ago. One by one I admired the farms and little villages, each bend in the river providing my eyes with a pleasant surprise.

By any measure of productivity, I had wasted the day. I had left home early and returned late in the afternoon with a spent roll of film and no regrets. The long days of summer will soon be here, and we all know how old dogs seem to have more itches to scratch when the weather warms.



The Commonwealth parked in front of the main hangar at Wyoming Valley Airport.



Flying low over the Susquehanna. Note the low farmland on the inside of the bend and the steep rocky wall on the outside of the turn. Note also how the sky has turned milky from the crisp blue of the morning photo above; the result of the approaching weather.

Not to nag, but remember that high- tension transmission wires will often span rivers such as this at great heights.