



Stu Smith's Skyranger took home the Champion #4 spot at Arlington 2001

Society for Preservation And Restoration of Skyrangers

SPARS #12, March 2002

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The Return of SPARS

I know you've all been wondering what happened to SPARS 12. I'd promised to have it out in the mail by September or so of last year, and magically, nothing materialized. Well, it actually wasn't magic - it was a new job. In August I took on a new job helping lead a small high-tech startup here in Pittsburgh, and it's been occupying all of my waking hours, including quite a few that used to be non-waking. It's been exhausting and gratifying, but most of the other activities in my life have been on hold for the past six months.

And now it's already March. There hasn't been any slowdown in my new job, but I'm trying to start pulling the rest of my life back off the shelf and resume my role as a normal (?) person.

There's been a lot of news since the last issue of SPARS, and a lot of it hasn't been good news. No doubt you've already heard that we recently lost Ken Rearwin, but I'm attaching Eric's notice with some more information.

Ken Rearwin Passes Away by Eric Rearwin

The antique aviation community has lost one of its Favorite Sons with the passing of Kenneth R. Rearwin on July 30 of this year. He succumbed after a brief but severe battle with cancer just after his 88th birthday.

Ken was one of aviation's early pioneers. With his brother Royce and father Rae, he helped start Rearwin Airplanes in 1929 and he later sold airplanes in the 30s and 40s when private aviation was just starting to blossom. He flew hundreds of hours delivering planes trade shows and customers.

Ken applied his seemingly endless energy to worthy causes of all kinds, including museums around the country, scholarships, and appearances where his lively recollections of the 1930's were a delight to both young and old.

He was known for his tireless spirit and devotion to worthy causes while serving on the boards of the San Diego Aerospace Museum and the Parker Foundation, an influential charity that gave millions of dollars annually.

Few men have contributed so much to so many, and his contributions will be greatly missed.

He leaves behind a legacy of courage, service and commitment to the field of aviation he loved so dearly.

The family would like to thank everyone for their love and support. In lieu of flowers, donations will be accepted to the Rearwin Airplanes Foundation, PO Box 70044, Point Richmond, CA 94807-0044 or the San Diego Aerospace Museum.



Well, I missed Blakesburg yet again, but again the omnipresent Ed Gallagher captured the Skyranger contingent for posterity. I recognize about half the gang here – could someone help me out with everyone's names?

Geneseo

Way back in the last issue, we'd been talking about a mid-July fly-in to somewhere in western New York. A flurry of email set the target as Geneseo on July 14th, for their annual warbird airshow. B-17s, P-51s, and a big grass runway – what more could you ask for?

Running up to the weekend, it looked like we were going to have four Skyrangers on hand, but weather and last-minute flight duty kept all but me and Bob Tilden from managed to

bring our Skyrangers. Ed Gallagher (who seems to be nearly omnipresent) arrived by land.

I'd never been up that way before, and was taken by the beauty of the Genesee river and surrounding farmland. I also don't think I'd ever seen a stretch of airfield turf that large.

As promised, we had an up-close-and-personal view of the B-17, along with a gorgeous replica P-51B in Tuskegee "redtail" dress. Accompanied by a window-rattling F4U, these gorgeous warbirds made pass after pass over the airfield, pulling in tight formation. Watching (and listening) to them come in over the farmland in the late afternoon sun, it was hard not to feel transported back 50 years to England. Okay, I know they didn't have Corsairs in England, but it was a special sight.

Sun-n-Fun coming up

It's acting like midwinter up here in Pennsylvania, but spring's just around the corner in Lakeland, Florida. Sun-n-Fun is just about a month away, April 7-13. It is hard to find hotel space there during the fly-in, so people should call now if they're interested in attending. Eric Rearwin will be there as will Alex Fodor. Web site is <http://sun-n-fun.com>.

Skyranger Gear!

Bob Riffle has put together some great accessories for Skyraenger owners at an online store at <http://www.flightinfostore.com/skyraenger.html>. He's got replacement data plates, trim plates, stick boots and gear boots. I bought one of his replacement data plates to replace my own missing one, and they are beautifully made. Haven't yet bought the replacement stick boots I need, but they're on my Christmas list.

In the long interval since the last SPARS, Eric Rearwin has also added some nice merchandise to the Rearwin page at <http://www.rearwin.com/hats.htm> – you can get Rearwin pins and an original-style tail logo in addition to the hats and Rearwin book Eric's made available in the past.

Even though it's been over six months, I still haven't forgotten about Wayne Forshey's t-shirts, discussed in SPARS 11. We've got enough people to justify putting together an order, I just haven't, umm, had the chance. I'll put that on my to-do list, and will hope to have t-shirts available by the next issue (which I'll hope to have out before the *next* millenium).



Chuck Stottlemyer's Skyraenger - N92833

I met Chuck Stottlemyer just after he'd bought his basket case Skyraenger (SPARS 9), and had formed a plan to turn it back into a flying bird. He'd spent something like 12 years "restoring" a Great Lakes from the data plate up, and hoped to have the Skyraenger done on a slightly tighter schedule. He's been no slouch, and is about 90% done with the restoration. What's left, as he says, is the remaining 10% that takes 90% of the time.

Chuck was originally aiming for a "first flight" on 92833's 56th birthday – April 1st. Hmm, that's the day I bought NC33395; . I hope it's not nature's way of hinting that April 1 is a special day for Skyraenger owners.

In any case, I don't have any recent photos. Here are some of details and questions from Chuck's latest email:

92833, sn29 has the left wing done, right wing at first coat of silver and endless sanding, control surfaces ready for spray. Fuse is ready for cover, but first I need to do some detail work, such as: Are the tubes that go from the glare shield to the top of the cabin grey, or fuse color? Windshield frames were grey. Correct? My glare shield was grey with carpet glued to the top. Is that correct? Interior of the cowling, boot cowl, etc was grey. Correct? Door frames were painted tan. ???

If anyone knows these (and other) details, please send Chuck email at charle@indy.net.

The *other* Commonwealth

Willy Williamson wrote in to let us know that the rights to the Commonwealth Trimmer are for sale in the most recent issue of Trade-a-Plane. Like Willy, I've always had a soft spot in my heart for this orphaned amphib – it would be great to see one of these built again! From Willy's email:

My father left me a bunch of old magazines and in the Dec. 46 issue of Flying there is a picture and minor write-up in their review of personal aircraft. There is also a Continental ad with a drawing of it. Anyway, that really whet my palate being I was in love with Grumman amphibians. Most of my flying career was in the HU-16 Albatross. Anyway, years later, between 80 & 82 I saw the Trimmer listed in Trade-A-Plane for \$82,500. The rights, prototype, second hull and a whole stack of parts, etc. I called on it and was told that there had already been 27 pre production modifications. I didn't have the money nor the place to put it, so it was just a mental exercise. However the love for the little amphib was stronger than ever. Throughout the years I have continued to look for this prototype and the person who has the rights, so I could talk them out of a license to build one. I found a little write-up in another magazine (Nov 45 Air News with Air Tech). It was pretty brief and only a nice drawing of the plane. I was also able to find out that it was type certificated by the CAA, and I believe it is the same as Mr. Biemond's, which is A15WE, but I'm not sure. I found a picture of it on the internet a couple of years ago, and downloaded it. I have not been able to find the link again though.

Here is some of the info on the Trimmer if anyone is interested. This info comes from Air News. The Trimmer was originally designed as the Allied [Aviation, Inc.] Amphibian.

Dual controls, 3 seats which can be converted into 2 bunks.
Also a built in galley...

Wingspan	35' 6"
Length	24' 10"
Height (on gear)	8' 7"
Gross Wt	2200 lb
Empty Wt	1470 lb
Engine (2)	Continental C-85, 85hp
Fuel burn	9 gph total
Top Speed	132 mph
Cruise Speed	115 mph
Landing Speed	48 mph
Takeoff	635' (6mph headwind)

Description (my own looking at the pictures). Twin engine Amphibian with a double stepped hull and fixed wing floats. Wing is cantilever and the horizontal stab is single strut braced. Gear is conventional which retracts similar to a Widgeon, however not into the hull its self. Instead there is a fairing on the side of the fuselage that covers the wheel. Pilot/co sit below the leading edge with the props forward of the windscreen. It appears to have ground adjustable (2 position?) props. A single clamshell entrance door is aft of the trailing edge of the wing. A single cruciform tail.

Oh yeah, who am I? I'm just another airplane buff & private pilot, who prefers amphibian (duh!) and tube and rag jobs. I'm an A&P with most of my time on the Grumman Albatross, HC-130 Hercules, and my ex-Piper Cherokee... If I can be of any assistance to your group, please let me know.

F.T. "Willy" Williamson
Forestall, MA
508-539-6677

Another one joins the fold!

Way back in November I got an inspiring bit of mail from our most recent Skyranger owner. Charley is a great storyteller himself, so um, I'll let him tell the story:

The story that leads up to the "requirement" for an aircraft like the Skyranger will take a little while to type, but the acquisition of the airplane happened "overnight"! My flying partner, Will, was up in N. Calif. on business last Wednesday. He called me as he was passing through Woodland, Ca.:

"Charley, I remember seeing an ad in the Pacific Flyer for a Champ or something up here in Woodland, something with a tailwheel and sticks."

I replied "Wait a sec...", logged into the PacFlyer website, hit the classifieds link, and read back to him "1946 COMMONWEALTH SKYRANGER 2-PLACE TAILDRAGGER. HANGARED, WOODLAND, CA. 85 HP, STICKS, XPDR/COM/NAV. \$14,500 (503) 406-1386."

He said "I'll check it out"

Three hours later, I got a call from Will "Guess where I am?"

"In Woodland!?"

"Just getting out of the plane!"

SPARS: Commonwealth/Rearwin Skyrangers
David Cohn, editor

In those three hours, I had done some quick research on Commonwealth Skyrangers, read your SPARS newsletters and other docs on the Rearwin site, and played back to Will what I had learned.

"So," I said, "they're good airplanes. How does this one seem?"

"Flies great, needs a bit of work, but mostly cosmetic other than some small mechanical items!"

"Sounds good..."

"What do you want to do?" (Me, because I was looking for a small trainer for my son and I to work on and for him to learn to fly in).

"Let's work a deal with the guy!" (Billy Shea, who had unfortunately lost his medical)

"Okay, I'll talk to him and call you in the morning"

Thursday morning, Will calls and said that he had come to an agreement with Billy, and it was a deal. I responded "Pick me up tomorrow morning in Sacramento!"

I flew out on Southwest first thing Friday morning, travelled to the Yolo County airport with Will and Billy, and became acquainted with our new plane. First thing that hit me was that tail that had migrated off of a DC-3! All around, the airplane was obviously old and in need of some repairs, but was airworthy to the point I felt confident that it could make the trip back down to our home airfield at Redlands, just east of L.A. So, we performed some minor "field expedient modifications" to assure us the plane would make it home without problems, and hit the air. Five hours and forty-five minutes of flying time later, we were tying it down at its new home.

So, not knowing what a Skyranger was on Wednesday morning of last week, I find myself a new owner, already deeply involved in getting this very fun and very unique airplane cleaned up. I just rebuilt the tailwheel over the last two days, Aircraft Windshield will have the two new windshield halves ready tomorrow for installation, and I am looking forward to the following years working on it with my son and having Will teaching him to fly in it (Derek is 13).

I will report more on NC92827 in the coming days and weeks...I appreciate your efforts in putting the Skyranger owners of the world together through your SPARS newsletters, and I offer whatever help I can to aid you in your efforts.

Highest Regards,
Charley Zurian, cz@transfx.com

Some queries

Paul Wescott (pswestcott@mindspring.com) is looking for an extra unbutchered instrument panel? He needs the outer piece only, someone cut off the bottom of ours and riveted an apron on which ain't original and isn't too pretty.

33395's panel is a fiberglass replica – I expect that, if Paul can borrow an original, it wouldn't be too hard to whip up another duplicate the same way – any volunteers?

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