



Ken Oder's Skyraider #1733, now for sale

Society for the Preservation And Restoration of Skyrangers

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Hello Again!

No, SPARS hasn't quite vanished off the face of the earth, but it did take a little vacation. Late last year, fate conspired to put me through a job search just as our new baby arrived and my other commitments all came crashing in at the same time. Quite predictably, my resolve to get SPARS out on time went right out the window. But I've got a nifty new job (with one of those internet dot-com startups), a baby boy who's not quite sleeping through the night, (Jeremy Alan Cohn, born the day after Thanksgiving, now pushing 20 pounds), and a good stretch of flying weather. So here we go.

An East Coast Skyraider Get-together?

Once again, I'm going to miss Oshkosh due to business travel (could be worse – I'll be in Greece!), but I've been thinking about joining the annual "Sentimental Journey" Piper Party at Lock Haven, PA. The gathering is June 21-25, and focuses on the old ragwing Pipers. Lock Haven is the birthplace of Piper, and is within an easy day's flight of New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and some of Ohio, so I'm thinking it might be a nice opportunity to get some Skyraider owners together. Besides, we've all been called "Piper" so many times, we might as well join the party. Besides, there'll be Stearmans and Ryans and more – look for more information at <http://www.vsk.cape.com/~cruiser/lhv.htm> and call/write/email me if you're planning to attend.

Memory Lane

Ed Gallagher has sent me a few of his reminiscences of flying his Skyraider back when it was considered modern transportation. Having once taken the train home to Boston from Pittsburgh when my Skyraider was weathered in, I can particularly identify with one of his stories:

It gives me great pleasure in remembering all the flights in my Skyraider. On one trip to Weirton WV, actually to Stuebenville OH, but landing at Weirton Airport, which was made of mine tailings. Well on the return trip my passenger, had decided he could not stand the flight back as it was a little rough, and I had just made 5000 feet when he advised me of this fact, so I landed at a field in Alexandria or maybe New Alexandria east of Pittsburgh, so I did drop him off and there was another Commonwealth in the Hanger. He took a cab to Greensburg and took the Train, arriving in New York about 1:30 AM and I was home at 6:30 on the same day. You must realize these were pre interstate highway days, and only 120 miles of the PA Turnpike. So with 96 miles an hour and five GPH, fuel at 36 cents a gallon, it was inexpensive travel. Ed G

Incidentally, Ed also sent me an **original, unused** Commonwealth Skyraider tail decal. Haven't figured out what to do with it yet. Ideally, I'd like to transfer it to some surface from which I can make a perfect copy, to allow folks to generate their own accurate tail decals. Again, time is the limiting factor at this point.

Franklin Engines

There's been a lot of interest in alternate engines for the Skyrainger. While there don't appear to be any STCs for anything but what the plane was originally certified with, there also seem to be plenty of Skyrangings with O-200s and O-235s, presumably put there by field approval. (The FAA maintains an on-line list of STCs at <<http://www.faa.gov/avr/air/stc/stc/stcfile/common.pdf>>). But hunting around for alternatives, I came across an interesting possibility for anyone looking to hang more power on the nose: a *new* Franklin engine. I'd heard that Franklin were producing engines again under the old type certificates, so I wrote to query for the specs (franklin@ezlink.com, or www.ezlink.com/~franklin). What I got back sounded intriguing:

The Franklin / PZL 4A-235-B3 aircraft engine was developed to be a higher power replacement for the Continental A-65 through O-200 engine line. As a result, the Franklin engine will fit directly to an O-200 engine mount, the exhaust system and carburetor mounts in nearly the same location and the cowling will usually still fit. The 4A-235 weighs within a few pounds of an O-200 when the engines are comparably equipped, yet it is rated at 120 HP.

Some advantages of the Franklin engine are as follows:

RELIABILITY: These are NEW aircraft engines, not a rebuild of a high time engine that has been subjected to years of unknown treatment. Because these engines are also used in helicopters (6-cylinder versions), where they are turned at 3200 RPM, they are under stressed in fixed wing aircraft where they are operated at 2800 RPM.

SENSIBLE ENGINEERING: The cylinders, bearings, valves, lifters, connecting rods, etc., are common throughout the engine line in production today, reducing cost and parts inventory problems. The cylinders have removable sleeves (cost only about \$70 each!) that are field replaceable, the camshaft is on the bottom of the engine, and the oil pump is in the sump, so there is less chance of losing its prime and the resulting dry starts, especially in cold weather. There is a removable top cover on the crankcase so that the inside of the engine can be easily inspected. The exhaust ports have insulating sleeves to reduce cooling requirements and simplify installation of exhaust manifolds.

SMOOTHNESS: All Franklin / PZL engines have a built in fluid damper on the crankshaft which makes them the smoothest aircraft engines of their size.

PERFORMANCE: Because of their high efficiency and lightweight, the Franklin often outperforms other engines in equal applications.

PRICE: There is not a more reasonably priced aircraft engine on the market today. For about the price of a quality rebuild, you can purchase a Factory NEW certified engine.

We have the Factory New FAA Certified Franklin 4A-235-B31 120 HP powerplant available. It currently sells for \$7,000 outright without accessories. We can provide you with a complete line of modern and Lightweight accessories including:

New Slick Magnetos - \$790-
New Lightweight (8lbs) High Torque Starter \$450-
Alternator - \$220 - \$550-
Marvel Schebler Carburetor - \$890-

(Other accessory options available upon request)

Franklin Aircraft Engines, Inc.
136 Racquette Dr.
Ft. Collins, CO 80524
Phone: 970-224-4404

Given that the Skyrainger was certified with a Franklin 80, it might not actually be too hard to convince the FAA to give a field approval to slap one of these puppies up front. The C-85 in my Skyrainger still has plenty of years left on it, but I can't imagine that there isn't someone out there raring to build a "Super Skyrainger" with 120 horsepower.

Skyranger Metalwork

You may recall that a few issues ago, Pat Groover offered his sheetmetal services to Skyranger owners. It turns out that Pat's metalworking talents extend beyond aircraft. He wrote to me about how he made a couple of suits of armor for his grandchildren (either they're into medieval history or they live in a *really* tough neighborhood). Somehow, word got out, and he was contacted by someone who wants him to start building kid-sized armor suits on a regular basis for all his customers. Still, if you're interested in any cowling work, or a suit of armor, Pat's the man to contact: <phg111@gte.net>, or call him at 813-757-6754.

Flying with the Doors off

One of the queries on the Skyranger email list (skyrangers@ai.mit.edu) was about what sort of complications one would face in flying with the doors off. I hemmed and hawed about the legal requirements, but Tom Scott (who restored 33395 from bare metal) weighed in a safety concern:

I got the forwarded email regarding flying the Skyranger with the doors off, and my immediate impression was DON'T !

The fuselage fabric on the Skyranger is not designed for doors off use. The attachments are not secured in the same way as in open cockpit aircraft. You could run the serious risk of blowing the cover off the plane. While I don't expect a catastrophic loss of the cover, it never the less could do some "safety of flight" damage.

In addition to having their fabric wrapped, and sewn, around structure, open cockpit aircraft also have a girdle, or strip of tape around the fuselage, aft of the cockpit. This girdle keeps strips of fabric from tearing all the way back to the empennage, should they come loose at the cockpit.

My advice is to open the window, and wear light clothing, it's much safer.

Tom



Commonwealth Brakes and Props

More where-is and how questions. Ages and ages ago, Alex Fodor <AJSEF@webtv.net> wrote, asking:

I am looking for a master cyl. for my 1946 commonwealth that sells for less than \$300 . If any body out there knows of where to get one please write. I think I found one from Univair but they want \$317.00. What I need is the push rod only that goes through the center of the master cyl. But if I have to I will purchase the whole cyl. HELP!

I hope Alex has found an answer by now, but if you've got a source you'd like to share, please let me and Alex both know. I'll stick it in the next issue of SPARS (which, I promise, will come out before the year 3000).

Mark Schaden <mark@modex.com>, of the gorgeous restoration featured in the last issue of SPARS, asks:

Anybody know what type of prop this is: McCauley 1A-CF-7149 as far as being a climb, standard or cruise prop? I have it installed on a C85-F, since I am getting poor climb performance I assume that it might be a climb prop.

I would be interested in hearing what other Skyranger owners are using for props.

I've got a metal, Sensenich M76AK-2 on mine (in front of a C-85). My climb performance is fairly weak when there are two on board, but cruise is ~95 mph. Solo, climb is remarkably better, and cruise comes out near 100 mph. The TC data sheet lists a few props that are acceptable for the different engines, as does the STC sheet from the FAA. The TC sheet is also available from the FAA at an incomprehensible URL; I've made a copy of it and stashed it at <<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~cohn/flight/commonwealth-tc.pdf>>

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