



## Society for Preservation And Restoration of Skyrangers

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Melvin Miller's prize-winning Rearwin

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### Blakesburg

After years of broken promises, I finally made good on my intentions to attend the AAA/APM fly-in in Blakesburg, Iowa. Now, for those of you who don't know the Antique Airplane Association (shame on you!), they're a low-budget grassroots organization dedicated to keeping the antiques flying. None of the Blue-Angels-Concorde-military-high-speed-flyby stuff, these folks live and breathe the world of tube and fabric aviation. Give 'em a look on the web at <http://www.aaa-apm.org/>.

But as I was saying, I finally made it to their annual fly in. Six hundred fifty sweaty miles across the heartland on Labor Day weekend were well repaid. Not only did we manage to get four Skyrangers together at the same time, but it was a chance to meet Skyranger owners I'd only ever heard from through the mail. Kyle Hardman and his father Leon braved the southern heat to bring N37890 up from Texas (yow!), and Melvin Miller made the hop from nearby Jefferson Falls, IA. Melvin's Skyranger, N34831 took the "Best Rearwin" trophy, setting the challenge for the rest of us next year (Hmmm, I guess I can claim to have brought the only "Commonwealth" to the fly-in - does that mean I get "best Commonwealth"?)



David Cohn does some tailwheel work on NC33395 ("Our Lady of Perpetual Maintenance") as Al Barbuto, Leon and Kyle Hardman lend a hand

There were plenty of Skyranger pilot/owners there without planes, too. Ed Gallagher, well-known on the SPARS mailing list, dropped by, piloting a mobile home across the country. Newly-minted owner Chuck Stottlemeyer cornered us all seeking advice on the Skyranger-in-a-box he'd bought (see below), and I finally got to meet the legendary Al Barbuto. Doug Sockwell made it up from Texas, where his Skyranger is still in the shop.

For me, the highlight of the fly-in was finally getting to meet Ken Rearwin, one of the people who actually made the Skyranger happen. Though no longer a kid, Ken captivated us with his tales of days at the Rearwin factory with brother Royce and father Rae. That, by itself, was worth the 14 hour round trip.



## The "Working Girl" Goes to Blakesburg

By Kyle Hardman

This is the story of a less than pristine Skyranger's trek to the annual Antique Aircraft Association fly-in near Blakesburg, Iowa. The "Working Girl" is a 1941 Rearwin Skyranger. She is number 78 of the 82 built by Rearwin before the war. Her logbook tells the story of an airplane that has had to earn its keep. The plane has had over a dozen owners, who have used her for everything from flying pipelines to acrobatics. Two years before I bought her she was still being used, by a commercial glider operation in Maryland, as a transition trainer to teach would be tow pilots, who had learned to fly airplanes with "milk stool" landing gear, the idiosyncrasies of a tail wheel. Her current "job" is that of sight seeing trips on sunny afternoons and an occasional cross-country to some fly-in. At age 59, the "Working Girl" has retired.



N37890 - "Workin' Girl"

For those who have never been to the AAA fly-in, you are really missing out. This year's fly-in hosted over 200 antique aircraft. Many of the airplanes are one of a kind or last surviving. Make plans for next Labor Day weekend to be there.

My farther and I started our trip from our home airport in Denton, Texas just north of Dallas. North Texas saw a hard summer, with no rain and temperatures over the century mark. We departed about 8:30, with the OAT already reading over 100°. With two men, clothes for four days, and eighteen gallons of gas we were AT (possibly slightly over) gross weight. Performance was less than stellar. We found the A-80 Continental would not run at full power for more than a few minutes without over heating. At about 85% power the needles could be kept in the green arcs. However at that throttle setting the airplane quit climbing about 1000 feet above the ground. We had found our service ceiling at 1800 feet MSL!

A long two and a half hours later found us at Okmulgee airport in Oklahoma. Here we refueled, stretched our legs, bought sodas and snacks, and readjusted our flight plan to accommodate our slow airspeed. After a quick walk around we were back in the air. As we came up the east side of Tulsa my farther noticed that the Hobbs meter was dangling from one screw from the bottom of the panel. I told dad to fly while I gave this some attention. I reached down for the Hobbs and it fell off in my hand. I unplugged the leads from the back and threw the offending instrument over my shoulder. I now held in my hands two wires one of which ran back to the fuse box. Not knowing which fuse and not really keen on experimenting with the electrical system in flight, I decided to wrap the end of the wire to insulate it. My farther suggested the wrapper of the Snickers bar I had bought at Okmulgee. I opened the bag, only to have the contents pour out like soup. I now had a real mess. My next instinctive reaction was to shove the remains of the Snickers bar in my mouth. However in my haste to rid myself of the Snickers bar, I forgot my boom mike. I now had a hot wire in my left hand, a gooey candy wrapper in my right hand, and a chocolate coated boom mike in front of my face. My worse fear was I would soon die, as my farther was having increased trouble keeping the plane upright as he laughed uncontrollably through the intercom into my ears. After wrapping the wires in a handkerchief and retrieving the controls from a man with tears in his eyes, we made the next leg to Butler, Missouri without incident.

We found that not all FBO's are created equal and Butler was very proud of 100LL. Here we paid \$2.50 per gallon, at Okmulgee they had charged us \$1.67. They did let us borrow the courtesy car to grab a hamburger. A ride in this city owned vehicle was the most dangerous part of the trip. We tried to buy the Chicago sectional (the one with Blakesburg on it) from the operator at Butler, but he did not sell sectionals. So we prepared to depart. While running my finger down the leading edge of the prop (part of my preflight) I noticed the screw that holds the cap over the prop lugs was loose. I was able to remove it with my fingers along with the cap. The nut plate hand broke. While we scratched our heads, the Butler operator reappeared with a new nut plate. He gave it to us for free, which did make us feel better about his gas prices. After a quick repair we were on our way again.

Next stop was Chillicothe, only a hundred miles short of our destination. Here is where the Kansas sectional stops. A group lounging under a shade tree told us, yes, they do sell sectionals, but the office closed twenty minutes ago. Then one man got up and told us to follow him, he would show us where they keep them. We put a ten dollar bill where the Chicago sectionals were kept and we hope no one ever comes after us for stealing. With the help of our new chart, we arrived in Blakesburg at about 7:30. We would wisely spread the trip back over two days, but that is another story.

## Sentimental Journey

As those of you who follow the SPARS email list know, a few of us Skyranger owners crashed the Piper party at Lockhaven this year. Um, so maybe I shouldn't use the word "crash" – we brought our distinctly non-Piper Skyrangers in to the annual ragwing Piper fly-in at Piper's birthplace. Bob Tilden and I both managed to get our Skyrangers there, but didn't quite manage to do it on the same day. The ever-present Ed Gallagher tells me that Bob arrived just a few minutes after I'd headed out westbound for home. Nonetheless, it was a good fly-in for all. Amid the rows and rows of Piper products, everyone seemed to want to know what a Commonwealth was (great old rare bird), where it was built (Kansas City), and how it flew (better than a Piper).



Maybe next year we ought to try to actually coordinate a meeting at Lock Haven? It's a good central spot for the numerous Skyrangers on the east coast, most of which I've never seen. It's also just a wee bit closer than Blakesburg, though you can count on me trying to make both of them from now on.

## New Stuff @Rearwin.com



Eric Rearwin's added even more good stuff to his site. A visit to [www.rearwin.com](http://www.rearwin.com) now has links to online classified ads – folks looking to buy and sell Skyranger parts. Oh yeah, and some of the earlier Rearwin birds, too.

Eric's also made up a set of nice-looking Rearwin hats. Quite a few folks at Blakesburg were wearing them. Hat color is black, price is \$12.00 - add \$1.50 shipping and handling for 1-3 hats, \$3.00 for 3 or more. Mail money order or personal check to:

Eric Rearwin  
PO Box 70044  
Point Richmond, CA 94807-0044

Include name, address, and the number of hats that you are ordering. Allow 7 days for your check to clear.

Also check out the web site's guest book and new discussion forum.

## A Few New Skyranger Owners

Upon arrival at Blakesburg, I was immediately greeted not by the welcome wagon, but by Chuck Stottlemeyer <charle@indy.net> of Indianapolis. Chuck turned out to be better than a welcome wagon - after he'd helped me tie down, register, and find shade, he bought me a beer and told me of his new interest in Skyrangers. It turns out that he'd just bought a Skyranger project that was as complete as they come. Former owners disassembled it for restoration in 1973, and well, never quite got around to it. Chuck's spent the past 12 years restoring a round-engine Great Lakes "from the data plate up"; he's hoping the Skyranger will take a little less time than that. Judging from the photo of the Great Lakes, it'll be a gorgeous Skyranger when it's done.

Gary Danford <gary.danford@dfas.mil> reports that he's the proud new owner of Ken Oder's Skyranger, N92999. You might remember this one from the masthead of SPARS #8. It sounds like he's planning to take it down and do a full restoration. It's already prettier than my Skyranger, so I look forward to seeing the final results.

Got a note from Marty Miller - "A friend and I just bought NC31209, a Skyranger C-185 in June. It had been in a flood, and we just had it annualled yesterday. It hadn't been annualled since 1995! It's serial number 1812. It's coming out very nicely, and we hope to paint it in August." Marty is looking for the Skyranger cowl logo. I've seen grainy pictures of it, but haven't yet seen the real thing up close - anyone have one? If so, let me know, and also send email to Marty at <jdahlen@ci.tacoma.wa.us>.

## Gone West

We've lost a couple of Skyranger owners since the last SPARS mailing. Richard Mangekian, of Nashua NH lost his battle with cancer. He was in the process of restoring Skyranger #1758 (N93253). A group of his friends have banded together to try to finish the restoration. They're at the disadvantage of not having been present at the disassembly, and would love some pointers from someone who can tell them how everything goes together. Best person to contact would be Jerry Breeyear, of Nashua, at <Gbjabreeyear@cs.com>.

Although I don't have any further information, the USPS returned a copy of the last newsletter sent to Harold Miller of Ft. Collins CO, listing Harold as deceased. I'd never met Harold; if anyone has any further information to pass along about Harold or his Skyranger, I'd be grateful for it.

## Aeromatic Props

Those of you who have perused the STCs available for the Skyranger and no doubt noticed that it's certified for the Aeromatic variable-pitch propeller. The variable pitch is intended to help takeoff performance, and might even improve cruise. While an interesting idea, the STC was generally moot due to the extreme scarcity of the props in question. But Phil Stewart sent me a pointer to a fellow named Kent Tarver, who might be changing all that.

Kent has acquired the TC and original shop equipment for building Aeromatic props. They'll be building new ones and overhauling old ones. I haven't checked up on it, but production is supposed to have started this summer. If you're interested, you can look Kent up at Aeromatic LLC, Hanger 4C, 1500 Rio Vista Drive, Fallon, Nevada, 89407, or send him email at <kent@phonewave.net>. If anyone follows this up, please let me know!

## Parts is Parts

As noted in Kyle's classified on [www.rearwin.com](http://www.rearwin.com), he's parting out Skyranger #1700, pictured here. Kyle writes "Here is a fun game. Look closely and you too will find the remains of Skyranger #1700 hidden in this picture. The roof of this "garage" in Flowermound, Texas had collapsed. The recovery of this Skyranger more resembled an archeology dig. The structure was pier and beam, pieces of the cowling were found under the building! Most everything from the firewall back is there. Too much rot and rust to ever fly again, but a good parts find.



**Find the Skyranger in this picture**

Also on the parts front is a find from Ranley Nelson, of Butler PA. Ranley just bought a pile of miscellaneous Skyranger parts from Dick Fry and, not being a Skyranger owner, he's willing to sell. Yeah, I know, I should buy them all up immediately to form a stockpile. But if you're interested in specific parts, give Ranley a call at 724-287-6659.

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