

International Fleet Club

NEWSLETTER

Cover Photo

Rick Ropkey's NC758V,
new in 1930 at Midwest
Airways in Milwaukee.



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From the Editor

It's winter – a good time to think about restorations. In this issue we profile 6 of the many projects we know are out there, each with its own story. We have great adventure tales and updates from Buddy (Wehman) and Buddy (Silvers), a heart-warming Fleet-comes-home story from Tom Flaglor, news of a twenty year project from Stan Sweikar, a long-term (3 decades!) restoration from Rick Ropkey, a report on the next generation of Fleet restorers from Brian Coughlin and a long-distance bulletin from Kristjan Viking in Iceland. This is one lucky batch of old airplanes: lovingly cared for, worked on and preserved – and soon to return to the sky.

It's been great hearing from all of you and thanks to those who have moved over to "electronic only" delivery of the newsletter. Keep the news coming and make sure we have accurate contact information.

Happy New Year!



Rick Ropkey next to his newly restored fuselage, 2010

RESTORATIONS

Rick Ropkey

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From a self-proclaimed loyal reader of the Club newsletter over the past 3+ decades (WOW, how did that happen?):

I thought a progress report on my Fleet model 1 was in order and perhaps a bit overdue after 35 years. Real life sometimes operates on a different schedule than that anticipated or planned by those of us actually living it. I purchased this Fleet in 1975 and soon realized that I lacked the necessary skills and experience to do justice to her proper restoration. Thirty-five years, an A+P license and 10+ completed airplane restoration projects later, I am finally focused on completing the Fleet. Over the years it was the Club members who taught me so much about the Fleet. Their willingness to take their personal time to teach "the new kid" was one of nicest experiences of my life. I was 20 at the time. Without their network of technical information, real life experience and support this seemingly simple but difficult (to do correctly) restoration project would not have been possible or practical for me. I use the word "practical" loosely.

NC758V was purchased new by Midwest Airways in Milwaukee Wisconsin. Two brothers, Frank and George Hale of Terre Haute Indiana traded a Ryan Brougham for it in the mid 1930s and brought it to Paul Cox Field in Terre Haute. They sold her to RTAC, Roscoe Turner Aeronautical Corporation where she was used for instruction in the CPTC program. Student pilots from as far away as China, the Philippines, Argentina and Brazil flew her at RTAC during WW 2. At the War's end Roscoe donated her to the local Air Scouts Troop. She was relocated to what was then known as Sky Harbor Airport on the far east side of Indianapolis, Indiana. It's now the Indiana State Police Headquarters. Imagine how excited the Scouts were as they taxied the old Fleet around with her wings removed! Korea came along and priorities changed for the young Air Scouts. NC758V was put out to pasture quite literally and ended up sitting alongside a wingless Piper Cub in an apple orchard near McCordsville, Indiana, her fabric cover rotting in the elements. It was really a sad sight. She changed hands a couple of times in the 50s and early 60s. Most of the credit for her salvation

should go to a wonderful man from Sheridan, Indiana named Carroll "Curly" McVey. He recognized that she was something special, worthy of saving and ultimately being restored. He kept her pieces together, protected indoors, hanging from the ceiling of his workshop. It took some years of visiting Curly before he would consider selling his beloved Fleet to such an inexperienced kid as me. Later he told me that he just wanted to feel confident that I was the one who would actually put her back in the air again.

Fast forward 35 years, with extraordinary skill and devotion to the Fleet, my dear friend Dennis Hauk has put the Fleet restoration project back on the rails. God willing, the entire airframe with wings will be finished this winter. Only the covering of the lower wings and purchase of the flying wires remains. The Warner Scarab 110/125 is ready to go back together but for lack of technical information regarding proper balancing, I am holding off for now until I find someone with the expertise to balance it correctly.

I have attached some photos of the project including one taken when she was new in 1930 at Midwest Airways in Milwaukee. Please keep me on the mailing list and the newsletters coming. They have been a constant inspiration and kick in the head reminder for me to "stay the course" on the Fleet's restoration. Many thanks again for all you and the Club have accomplished in the name of preserving the wonderful legacy of Ruben Fleet.

Tom Flaglor

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An update on my Fleet, the Flaglor High-Tow: I have been following the airplane since 1992. It was offered by Rich Giannotti and Walt Winicki for sale, and I wanted it in the worst way. I had just graduated from college and didn't have a job yet, so there was just no way. Brent Blue



bought it, and I became acquainted with him. He flew it for a few years, and had it reworked by Aviat. Fast forward to 2006, and he unfortunately ended up putting it in a river in Wyoming. I struck a deal with Brent to buy it and restore the airplane. I have slowly been putting it back together since then. We could have had it done a couple years ago, but the economy has really hurt my airplane finances pretty bad, so it's been a slow-go. Anyhow, the airplane is about 95% done now, and should fly again in the spring or summer.

I tried to put it back together with the look and spirit of the airplane as it was originally built by my father and uncle, back in 1957. As you know, they modified it with the 220 Continental so that they could tow gliders at their operation at the old Chicagoland airport. The top wing and one lower wing were completely wiped out in Brent's accident. The most fortunate thing was that I was able to find and purchase new replacements for these items. Without them, the project would have been much more elaborate. I have tried to retain all the things that gave the "Flaglor HighTow" its character. The different shapes of the wingtips, tail surfaces, and fuselage have all stayed. I did update the instrument panels and made all new sheet metal. The paint colors and design are meant as a tribute to the original airplane. I have just run the engine for the first time and cannot believe the power on this light airframe. It is really going to go!

I am an A&P/IA and live on a 2200' strip in East Tennessee (8TN4). I am an unemployed professional pilot, but do work as a Project Engineer and General Contractor when it is available. I have done a number of restorations over the last 20 years. I currently have a 1958 Cessna 180 that I rebuilt from a wreck, and have a Monocoupe project that will probably be my next challenge.

Buddy Wehman

October 1, 2010 was a very sad day. I was on what a friend called 'auto taxi' at an unfamiliar airport, arrived at the end of the runway, woke up, hit the brakes too hard, and did a ground level "outside flip." The wind was blowing at about 10 to 15 MPH from the north so that didn't help the cause, but "pilot error" was the real cause.

No human bodily injuries but my ole girl was severely damaged. Got the rudder, vertical fin, prop, gas tank, and top wing front spar (cracks). I



am at least temporarily finished with the FAA. The future of N8742 was questionable at this point. And after 25 years of ownership and over a thousand hours of flying, I sure hated to think about losing my wonderful flying machine.

It took awhile but I finally satisfied the FAA. It seems that the investigator decided he was going to declare the "happening" an accident rather than an incident (my luck of the draw for an investigator was rotten to say the least). My first approach was to try to buy another Fleet that was airworthy and let somebody younger than me take on the rebuild of N8742. But I couldn't take a chance that some "irresponsible" person would buy the salvage and either part out the remains, or let it rot in some barn somewhere. So I decided to buy the salvage. After two trailer trips, I got the ole girl home without causing any more damage.

The top wing repair and new gas tank projects are coming along nicely thanks to my good friend Jim Wilson. The rudder and vertical fin are ready for installation. Al and Brad Ball have the engine, Sensenich is making a new prop. Should be back in the air by early summer. So the future is looking bright again!

And from another Buddy – Silvers

In July of 2010 I came across an ad for a 1931 Fleet Model 7 biplane, converted from the original Kinner to a 220 Continental engine. Since I live in Colorado the extra horsepower would be a great benefit. At the time I owned a 1945 Stampe biplane, licensed as an Experimental Exhibition category airplane, never certified in the USA. The Fleet was licensed in Standard/Normal category. The EE category restrictions include a ban on giving rides, whereas a Standard/Normal category is more flexible.

The seller, Aubie Pearman, was in Mississippi and was willing to trade. One of us was going

to have to fly a long ways in an open cockpit. We agreed to meet just north of Wichita. We would make our trade and each fly our respective airplanes home. It turned out to be a great plan!

A good friend Tom agreed to fly with me and my wife Anne accompanied us on the trip in



my pickup truck. Tom used his cell phone to get live weather radar images during the flight, so I nicknamed him "Radar." The Stampe performed perfectly on the trip. Aubie arrived in the Fleet and discovered he had left the Fleet's tailwheel at his last fuel stop! The remains of the tailwheel worked just fine on the grass as a brake. The next day we repaired the Fleet's tailwheel, swapped rides and made our trade. Aubie and I had become pretty good friends by the time we parted.

On the trip home we flew west along the section lines, over the Santa Fe Trail for a ways and getting close to Springs East Airport (A50) we began seeing the normal evening storms along the mountains. It was shortly after this that we hit some of the most severe turbulence I have ever experienced. We had to turn south to find someplace else to land. It was time to get back on the ground! I checked the GPS for nearby airports, but they were ALL north, west, or northwest from us. I found a field near Manzanola, CO which the GPS indicated was an airport. It had been at one time, but was now a melon field! Legal dark was still 45 minutes away, but I could no longer see my instruments. We cleared some power lines and touched down. I could not see the end of the field, but for a time I really thought we had made it. The balloon tires seemed to be doing fine until the very end of the landing roll but in the last few feet we hit something soft. The tail rose and I still thought it was going to come back down, but it continued to rise and I realized we were going over. I killed the mags and hollered at Tom to get out.

The really good news is that neither Tom nor I were hurt! The almost as good news is that

the airplane had fairly minor damage. I suppose if we had to flip it was as delicate as could be imagined. The best news is that after the FAA investigated they determined that I had done nothing wrong! They ruled it as an incident and not an accident which was a very good thing.

My wife is a treasure! She never faltered for a minute. I noticed that she was starting to cry after we had unloaded the wings and were getting ready to head home. I ask her why she was crying and was told; "I just don't want you to quit flying!" I had been afraid the entire time that she would want me to sell the Fleet and quit

And now the work really began! The rudder main post and leading edge would have to be replaced as would the two 45 degree braces. I had never done fabric before. I read the manual, watched the video, talked with my AI and many others, and started covering. Where do you get a Curtiss Reed prop from the 1930's repaired? Amazingly there is a WWII restoration shop and museum here in Colorado Springs. They have a prop shop and now it looks like new!

There was one rib on the top of the top wing immediately to the left of the gas tank that was broken and bent and some minor damage to a leading edge near the top left wingtip. These were all easy fixes. I had the wings hung and was ready to paint when I noticed what appeared to be fuel seeping around the outlets and the gauge, so I bit the bullet and removed and disassembled the tank. I was surprised to find that there was rust inside. I was also appalled to see the results of the sloshing compound which had been used to seal the tank. Once the tank was cleaned inside and out and the bulkheads had all been cleaned, I reassembled it with rivets for the bulkheads then had a friend weld the heads of the rivets to prevent leaks later and then weld the ends back into the tank.

This project is far from over. *To read the rest of this great adventure and see more photographs, go to:*

<http://www.usaviator.net/aviation/1931%20Fleet/01Fleetpretrade.htm>

Stan Sweikar

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At last retirement from my daytime career.....Now for some quality shop time in

finishing the restoration of NC431K (s/n 154). It's been twenty years in the coming, but we're getting close. Over the years the upper and lower wing panels (including the ailerons) were scratch built with the exception of salvaging the original the wing fittings. Last winter the wings were completed with the final finishing of the upper wing. The tail group was completed some years ago and the fuselage is about ready for cover, and the Kinner B54 is currently being overhauled by Al and Brad Ball. With the exception of hydraulic brakes, tail-wheel, and more modern instrumentation, the airframe remains in its original 1929 small tail configuration. At last I can see light at the end of the long tunnel.

Brian Coughlin

crosswinds.farm@yahoo.com

My son and I started to rebuild or rather build a 16-B from parts just a few days before the last newsletter arrived. We are going to use a fuselage I bought

from John Barker about 1998 along with parts and pieces collected from George Gregory, Bob Dart, John



Barker, Dick Coughlin and many others. The Fleet is owned by my son Teddy who is 10, perhaps the youngest Fleet owner! It'll take many years but hopefully it will pass some of the knowledge to a younger generation. We need instrument panels, instruments, rudder and fin to complete the fuselage – also a 16-B style tail wheel.

Kristjan Viking, Iceland

krvik@flugnam.is

I'm restoring my Fleet 16B: building the upper wing completely, the fuselage is finished, lower wings too. Engine will be back from overhaul in January.

Have covered the tail section. The work today is on the upper wing. I also have under restoration a Tiger Moth, and Super Cub from upside down accident.

Our museum e-mail is flugsafn.is

MEMBER NEWS

Fred Palombo, Alameda, CA

"My membership goes back to the early 1950. I am not longer a pilot or airplane owner – I am 93 years young! Looking at 94 and beyond. I enjoy receiving your fantastic newsletter – keep up the good work!"

Jean Lindsay

Sad news from daughter Jean Lindsay, that Donna Kinner Hunter passed away in January of 2010. I'm pleased to know that she enjoyed our newsletter and that she could see how vital the Kinner community remains. Jean also reports that her brother Russell Hunter has donated a 1934 Kinner Sportster that is being restored by the Wings of History Museum in San Martin, California. He also donated a Kinner K-5 engine. Website: <http://www.wingsofhistory.org/index.php/exhibits>

Mike Girdley

Mike.Girdley@rolls-royce.com

My Model 2 is still up and running. I had to replace the fuel gauge in the spring. The biggest issue with the aircraft now is acceptable fuel availability, 100LL will burn the valves and all the car gas now has 10% alcohol. I did not get the old girl out much this summer due to the UNREAL heat in the mid-west this year. Retirement is coming very soon and I will have more time to play with her and her hangar mate (1941 BC12-65 Taylorcraft Deluxe). New email will be: mike.girdley@att.net



Clifford Schrock

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I have been very negligent in not contacting you sooner to provide current information on our Fleet. It is alive and well, having passed its 80th Birthday last year in October with a mass celebration of friends during which I gave 11 rides. This year has been more difficult. I decided to pull the prop as part of the annual maintenance, a ground adjustable HS which had not been off the shaft for about 20 years and have it inspected and overhauled. Spent most of the summer trying to get the rear half of the prop hub off the taper shaft. Built a special puller with a hydraulic jack, and still it would not budge. Finally, using dry ice and a torch, it popped off. Found a crack in the front hub. So now in December, I'm just putting on a wood prop with hub until I see if we can find another hub for the HS. Of course some of the old timers say a Kinner B5 with the metal prop will break the crank eventually, but we have 30 years with no issues. Am also doing 3 cylinders, so unlikely I will have any time in the old girl before 2011, but should be ready for Spring-time. The other thing that happened during the Birthday flights was that one of the girls is an amateur photo buff and she took a lot of pictures, submitted them to the Portland Airport Annual Photo contest, and won. So the airport set up a display last Spring for about 6 months in a main concourse, with a dozen or so photos, including a goofy one of me taken from the front. I can't count the number of people who recognized me going through the airport and called or sent pictures of the pictures with their I Phones. Anyway, in summary, alive and well. Will continue to fly for years, God willing. My daughter is in line for the bird if something happens to me.



PROUD NEW OWNERS

Sandy Brown

reports "my Fleet (624M) was shipped to Dan Mokady in Israel, the new owner – a really nice fellow and will probably ask for lots of Fleet advice. It has been a fun experience dealing with him. His web site is www.paradive.co.il."

Vintage Wings of Canada

bought John Henrich's 16-B (N162V).
<http://www.vintagewings.ca>

Daniel Benkert

bought N748V – a project – from Robert Von Willer.

Bruce Allen

is now the owner of Bob Norris' N24197.

RESOURCES

The Resources section – a listing of professionals and providers of Fleet expertise and parts – has remained fairly stable for many years. In order to have space for other items of interest, it will not be printed with every Newsletter. Instead, we will post and update the Resources section on our website, and will print it occasionally when space allows and/or substantial changes are needed. If you need a printed list, contact the Editor. Vendors, please review your listing, and send any corrections or editions to the editor at : fleetclub@mac.com

CLUB INFORMATION

Electronic or Paper Editions of the Newsletter

With the increasing cost of paper and postage, and concerns about the environment, we want to make sure that we're not wasting resources. If you would prefer NOT to receive the paper version of the newsletter by US Post Office mail, and would prefer to read it on the website and view photos in living color, please let us know ASAP via e-mail: fleetclub@mac.com.

Your Photos for the Newsletter/Website

We love including your photographs in the newsletter and on the website. If at all possible, digital photographs are ideal. We can also scan good quality photographic prints and will return them if you indicate that's your preference. Generally, photocopies of photographs don't reproduce well enough to include.

How to Read Your Mailing Label

There are 5 pieces of information on the first line, each separated by a slash [/]:

Model # / Serial # / Registration # / Status of Aircraft / year of your last donation to the newsletter. If there is a question mark [?] instead of a year, we have no donation record. If you see two slashes together, that data is missing and we would like to hear from you about it. No data between the slashes means there is no record of you owning an aircraft. Also note regardless of how many aircraft you own, there is only space on the label to note one.

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Many thanks to the following members who made donations to the newsletter fund since Aug. 2010:

Antique Aero Engines	John Henrich
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Phil Bragg	Fred Palumbo
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Ron Donley	Harvey Sawyer
Larry Harmacinski	Bud Silvers
Chris Healy	Dale Weir
Bruce Allen	

Making Donations

There are no dues required for Fleet Club membership. Donations of any size are welcome and most appreciated, however, to support the production and mailing of the newsletter and website. Please make checks payable to Jim Catalano. To facilitate international donations, members can wire funds directly to the account; please e-mail Editor for instructions.

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Got Gas?

International Fleet Club
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